

nm5vn.org



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

NEW TOWN WEBSITE GOES LIVE

By Sandra Fusco Walker



This is the home page of the new Town website; directions for navigating it are contained in the article.

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Have you been to the Town of New Marlborough's website recently? In January of this year, the Town was notified that its website platform would be upgraded in late spring and the old website would no longer be available. Several new looks and options were showcased by CivicPlus and the new platforms included updated security features and accessibility.

After many hours of reviewing the old site and studying various options for a new site, the design was completed in late June and the website (<https://www.newmarlboroughma.gov/>) quietly launched on July 1. Members of the town hall staff continue to attend courses to learn how to use the website to its fullest and during the month of July, once the site was live, all pages, links, and information posted on the new site were reviewed.

The new home page includes a calendar that links to meetings and agendas placed alongside a billboard that hosts the categories: News & Notices, Public Records, Town Documents, and Current Projects. Above that, there are six buttons across the front of the page enabling visitors to quickly link to Agendas and Minutes, Online Services, Forms and Documents, Cable/Broadband, Social Media, and Hot Topics. Hovering over the links at the top of the page— About

continued

Website, continued

Our Town, Departments, Boards and Commissions, and Schools— uncovers all the links you'll need to find information. And on the new Most Visited Pages link on the upper right side, you can see the pages that others are visiting most often.

One improvement from the old site is the lack of exposed email addresses to reach department staff and committee members. This new security measure prevents spammers and hackers from direct access to email links for nefarious purposes. Another improvement is that ADA accessibility is now built into the site and will automatically be updated with new technologies as they develop. Lastly, if you have closed out the home page and are on a secondary page, you can click on ei-

ther the Town Seal on the upper left side or the Home symbol on the upper right side and immediately reopen the Home page.

As Town employees continue to work out kinks and make updates to the site, they look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from users to help make their experience using the website better. Also, please be sure to Subscribe to E-Alerts at the top of the page to receive News & Notices to keep current with issues and events in town.

For comments, suggestions, and help, please go to <https://www.newmarlboroughma.gov/board-selectmen> and send an email to Sharon Fleck. □

CABLE ADVISORY BOARD

It is Happening

The recently formed Cable Advisory Board in the Town of New Marlborough is now meeting on a regular basis. The purpose of this committee is to act as liaison and point of contact between Charter/Spectrum and the Town during the construction and enrollment period. It will keep the community informed of progress and answer broad-based questions from the community about ongoing service.



A familiar sight in New Marlborough as National Grid workers "make ready" for Charter/Spectrum cabling.

The Board is pleased to inform everyone in town that progress is being made. You may have noticed National Grid workers are inspecting poles throughout town, something that has to be done before any cabling by Charter/Spectrum can take place.

We have been told that National Grid expects to be completed with the process including any repair, replacement, or clearing of poles by this November.

At that point, construction by Charter/Spectrum will commence. Per New Marlborough's franchise agreement with Charter/Spectrum, construction must be completed within twelve months of that time. As homes are subscribed and wired, service will be turned on.

So, by November 2020 the vast majority of us in New

Marlborough will have the option to use Charter/Spectrum for internet, television and telephone service. What we at the Cable Advisory Board will do is update the progress as and when we receive information from the Charter/Spectrum. We are in contact with them at our regular meetings, although we do not expect a lot of updates until nearer fall. When we get it, so will the Town.

Yes, it is all happening at last. □

Michael Shocket

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NM5VN To Receive ELIHU BURRITT AWARD

A little over twenty years ago a few New Marlborough friends noted that residents of New Marlborough, spread out over five villages, did not have easy access to town news. Having read the *Monterey News*, one of those friends, Larry Burke, approached its editor who met with Larry and his wife Jane, Jon and Marianne Swan, and David and Barbara Lowman, and provided guidance on how to produce a town-wide newsletter.

The three couples recruited a small number of townspeople to join them, applied for 501c3 (non-profit) status, and the first edition of *The New Marlborough 5 Village News* was published in April 2000.

For the past twenty years, *The NM5VN* has kept to its original mission:

"The immediate goal of The New Marlborough 5 Village News is to bring news of the Town and items of upcoming interest or importance to the attention of our population, from one end of this decentralized town to the other. The broader, more long-term goal is to foster a greater sense of community and civic participation among the residents of New Marlborough."

Jon Swan served as the lead editor with Marianne as the primary layout person. The first staff members also included Pam Stebbins, Marsha Harvey, Amy Lynn, and Nick Hardcastle. Ever since the Swans moved to Maine in 2013, the editing of the paper has fallen primarily to Barbara Lowman, Joe Poindexter, and Larry Burke. Diane Barth became the layout designer at about the same time and this team now leads the monthly task of getting *The NM5VN* out on time. In over nineteen years, not one monthly issue has been missed.

The editorial board also includes reporters on Town business, feature writers, advertising and circulation managers, and throughout the years, many townspeople who've contributed articles, photos, and stories to the newsletter. The paper depends on its volunteers for content and on its readers for contributions to support costs associated with publishing a monthly newsletter. Over

the past twenty years, well over 100 local people have written for the paper.

From detailed reports of Board of Selectmen meetings in "Town Business is Your Business," to sharing news about local families in the "Neighbors" column, to a list of current hours that town facilities are open, *The NM5VN* has become an integral part of New Marlborough while wearing the hat of the Town Crier, keeping readers up to date about the news, events, and issues affecting residents throughout New Marlborough's five villages.

The NM5VN is mailed free to all residents who sign up for the mailing, and copies are always available at the Mill River General Store, the Southfield Store, the town library, and the Southfield Post Office. *The NM5VN* also is available online at nm5vn.org, where photos can be viewed in color.

Each August the New Marlborough Cultural Council presents its annual Elihu Burritt Award for outstanding community service. Council Chair Nancy Barbe offered these thoughts on this year's award: "The Cultural Council is thrilled to present the 2019 Elihu Burritt Award to *The New Marlborough 5 Village News* in this, its twentieth year. The *5VN* is an invaluable resource in our town. It helps keep us up to date on news, events, arts, leisure, police, and politics. The *5VN* brings us closer together as a community. We thank the many folks who work tirelessly to insure its timely, monthly production – reporters, editors, artists, and photographers."

The NM5VN's staff and board of directors are proud to be the recipients of this year's award and invite all the volunteers who have written for the newsletter over the past twenty years to join us at noon on August 17 on the New Marlborough Village Green, where Cultural Council treasurer, Richard Long, and Representative Smitty Pignatelli will present the award. Looking forward to seeing you all there! □

Sandra Fusco Walker

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Town Business Is Your Business

BOARD OF SELECTMEN



June 24: Prior to the start of the meeting, the Board, at Chairman Nat Yohalem's request, observed a **moment of silence in honor of three area residents** with close ties to the Town who died in the past week. They are Mike Levitas of New Marlborough village, former Southfield resident Hollis McNulty, mother-in-law of former Selectman Dan Litchfield, and Harry Fracasso of Clayton, husband of Town Treasurer Marilyn Fracasso. Mr. Yohalem offered condolences on behalf of the Board and the Town to the families of all three. The Board also agreed to close Town Hall for four hours on Wednesday, June 26, to allow Town Hall employees to attend Mr. Fracasso's funeral.

Then, going out of order, the Board took up the second of fourteen items on its agenda, which was to **review and approve a letter of response to the School Committee Chairman of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District (BHRSD) regarding the proposed formation of a Regional School District Planning Board, "for the purpose of either forming, or consolidating into, a regional high school district to serve grades 9-12."**

While applauding the Berkshire Hills initiative, the Board's letter, drafted by Mr. Yohalem, argued it didn't go far enough and furthermore would likely lead "to lengthy and complicated committee meetings." Instead, the Board urged Berkshire Hills to **form two small committees, one from each district, "to discuss how to consolidate both Districts, not whether there should be consolidation.** Our recommendation is to have three members on each committee – the District School superintendent, a member of the School Committee and a representative of the member towns."

The letter goes on to suggest putting a time line on when to expect a proposed plan "to assure this process does not take several more years." The Board then

approved a motion to send the letter to the chairmen of the Berkshire Hills and Southern Berkshire Regional School Committees, and the SBRSD School Superintendent, with copies to the other four SBRSD towns. (For the full text of the Board's letter see the box on page 10.)

The Board then moved on to what would prove to be the most contentious issue of the evening, which was to review the findings of the Employee Compensation Study and to act on proposed raises for five members of the Town Hall staff.

As previously reported, the voters at Annual Town Meeting caught the Board by surprise when it voted to give five, members of the Town Hall staff 5 percent raises. That's in sharp contrast to the 3 percent cost of living adjustments, or COLAs, the Board was recommending for the rest of the Town's employees. The only problem, it turned out in retrospect, is that according to state law the voters don't have the authority to determine salaries, only budgets, thus leaving the decision of what to do about the raises in the selectmen's hands.

The Board's first move therefore was to form an **employee compensation committee**, comprised of Selectman Richard Long, Town Administrator Mari Enoch and Finance Committee Chairman Steve Klein, to **compare New Marlborough job responsibilities and salaries with those of similar-sized Berkshire County towns to get a sense of whether the Town's employees are underpaid or not.** What the study determined, according to Mr. Klein, was that the Town Hall employees are "within the range of its peer set, in almost all cases." It was also noted that most of the other towns in the survey are giving COLA increases of 2 percent to their employees compared to New Marlborough's 3 percent.

The arguments and counterarguments for giving the

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Town Hall employees the raises went back and forth for nearly an hour, until finally Mr. Long, who appeared to be leaning towards giving them the five percent increase, said, "I would suggest, given that there's a lot of disagreement here and perhaps confusion, that we defer this decision until [the next meeting on] July 1." And with that Mr. Yohalem directed that it be added to the agenda for next week's meeting.

In other matters, the Board reviewed and approved a contract with White Engineering for the erosion control project at Umpachene Falls Park. The contract, negotiated by Mr. Long, calls for an estimated payment of \$10,500 to the firm to include reimbursable expenses. The Board also reviewed and approved the annual lease agreement with the Fire Company to continue housing the police cruiser for another year at a rent of \$500 per month. The lease will run until June 30, 2020.

The Board set a policy for the payment of additional compensation to the Town's tax collector and treasurer upon being certified by the Massachusetts Collectors and Treasurers Association. The payment, which according to state law would be ten percent of their regular yearly compensation but not more than \$1,000, will be made upon receiving notification from the Association that they passed the certification exam and would be made retroactive to the date of the exam, the money to be included in their salary. Currently, neither the tax collector nor treasurer are up for certification.

Moving on, the Board voted the following **Town appointments effective July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020:** Marsha Harvey, to the Council on Aging; Robert Twing, to the Umpachene Falls Park Commission; John Schreiber to both the Conservation and Historical Commissions; Gary Lemon as a part-time police officer, and Kathy Chretien as Assistant Tax Collector and Assistant Treasurer. The Board also established

a Citizens Advisory Committee for the Community Development Block Grant housing rehab program and appointed Nancy Worthington of East Hill Road, Elizabeth Rosenberg of Rhoades and Bailey Road and Mr. Yohalem – in order to have one member from Town government on it – to the committee. The committee's role, meeting on a quarterly basis, will be to update the Board on the program's status and hear grievances.

And for its last two items of business, the Board approved the minutes of the June 10 and June 17 meetings and then voted to recommend three reserve fund transfer requests to the Finance Committee. These included \$702 from the Highway Department for two plumbing bills for adjustments to the recently installed furnace at the highway garage; a request for \$1,500 for the Highway diesel account, and \$1,000 to pay the employer Medicare match.

Peter Schuyten

July 1: The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:15 p.m. At the table were Selectmen Nathaniel Yohalem, Tara White, and Richard Long, along with Town Administrator Mari Enoch and Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck.

As their first item of business, **the Board approved a Revolutionary War monument to be erected on the library lawn.** The monument will measure eleven feet tall by four feet wide by four feet deep and will resemble a small obelisk. The lower portion of the monument will feature two plaques. One will display the name Moses Adams, a veteran of the Revolutionary War from New Marlborough whose descendant Tom Adams came up with the idea for the monument. A second larger plaque will carry the names of all the other Revolutionary War veterans who were New Marlborough residents.

The entire expense of the monument is being paid for by Sons of the American Revolution, a national orga-

A Revolutionary War monument will be erected on the library lawn, to the right of the existing monuments.



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nization. Townsmen, such as Mike White who will be overseeing the installation, will donate time. The monument is welcomed by Library Director Deb O'Brien as well as the trustees of the library. Though the exact date of installation is still unknown, the location of the monument will be on the grass to the right of the current monuments as one is facing the main entrance of the library. At some future date after installation, Burial/Soldier Grave Agent Courtney Turner, who helped facilitate the project, would like to hold a public ceremony to include Tom Adams.

Next, the Board heard from Alexander Fox, business development manager for CVE North America, Inc., concerning the required decommissioning guarantee for the firm's proposed solar project on Knight Road. Mr. Fox **proposed a decommissioning guarantee in the form of a certificate of deposit, or CD**, from JP Morgan Chase. In the event CVE goes out of business, the Town would then be awarded the money in the CD account. The rationale behind the request, according to Mr. Fox, is that CVE did not budget for the required capital to put into escrow for a bond, so it would prefer to put the money in a CD where it could recoup the interest during the twenty-year term of the project. The Board agreed to accept the CD as the guarantee.

Sticking with the theme of solar projects and decommissioning guarantees, the Board agreed to accept two decommissioning bonds, subject to review by counsel, from Park Avenue Solar in the amounts of \$75,000 and \$35,000. The bonds cover Park Avenue's two solar fields to be located just off the Mill River Southfield Road.

Next on the agenda was the **appointment of Town officers** for the 2020 fiscal year. The Board approved all of the following for one year terms ending June 30, 2020: Rona Easton, Conservation Commission; Jack Bellinger, Board of Appeals alternate; Don Torrico, alternate

building inspector; Lon Combs, alternate delegate, Regional Planning Commission; Jane Beers and Merrie Abolafia, Council on Aging; Robert Litchfield, deputy emergency management director; and Sharon Fleck and Alicia Brazie, Board of Registrars. The Board is still waiting to hear from a number of this year's appointees on whether they wish to serve another term.

Ms. Fleck mentioned she'd heard from animal control officer John Springstube that he does not plan to continue in the position in FY20. Though the Board had not yet received official notification from him by the time of the meeting, Ms. White suggested that the Town reach out to nearby towns to discuss possible replacements, given that Mr. Springstube serves as Animal Control Officer for a number of them. In an emergency measure,

the Board appointed the Police Department to serve as the interim animal control officer until a replacement is found.

Moving on, the Board engaged in a **lengthy and sometimes contentious discussion of four proposed motions presented by Mr. Long in response to the 5 percent wage increases approved by the voters at the Annual Town Meeting for five Town Hall positions.** The five positions are the tax collector, treasurer, town clerk, assessor's clerk and administrative secretary. The Board readily approved three of Mr. Long's motions: 1) to initiate a process to formalize a human resources function and a structured personnel system, 2) to retain external consulting expertise to assist in this endeavor, and 3) to contact adjacent towns to determine if they have an interest in jointly participating in the effort. But it was the fourth motion, to approve the raises for the five "to the extent legally permissible or not in conflict with any pending personnel action until such action is resolved," that generated conflict on the Board, particularly between Mr. Long and Mr. Yohalem. But

In response to Berkshire Hills' proposal to plan for the possibility of a regional high school, the Board responded that the discussion should be how to consolidate both districts, not whether to do so.

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ultimately the motion passed by a two-to-one margin, with Mr. Yohalem voting against.

While that ended the agenda items, there were several notable updates by the Board and Town Administrator Enoch, with Ms. Enoch reporting that Highway Superintendent Loring spent \$12,000 shimming, or leveling, a section of Route 57. However, according to Ms. Enoch, Mr. Loring feels strongly that there's another section of the road that needs shimming as soon as possible and he would like the Board to prioritize the existing road projects to see if there's one that can be delayed in favor of the additional shimming project. The Board agreed to invite Mr. Loring to a future meeting to discuss it further.

In other matters, Ms. Fleck reported that the **Town's new website is now up and running.** The Board also approved a request from the Conservation Commission to pay the conservation clerk \$75 per month regardless of whether there's a meeting or not. Ms. Fleck also brought up the issue of compensatory time for Town employees, in which they would receive additional vacation time for working overtime or outside of regular business hours. Although no resolution was arrived at, all agreed it is not well described by the current personnel policy and should be addressed as soon as possible.

Finally, the office of Senator Adam Hinds notified the Board that members of his staff will be holding office hours at Town Hall on Wednesday, July 17, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The meeting is open to all constituents of the commonwealth and appointments can be booked in advance.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Jackson Liscombe

July 15: The meeting of the Board of Selectman convened at 6:05 p.m. Present were Chair Nat Yohalem and Selectmen Richard Long and Tara White, Town Administrator Mari Enoch, Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck, Chief of Police Graham Frank, and Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring.

The Board went out of order on the addressing

the agenda item regarding the **Park Avenue solar decommissioning bonds.** Ms. Enoch said that the representative from the company was unable to attend and had requested the item be moved to the next agenda. Mr. Yohalem stated that the board doesn't have a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement for this project. Ms. Enoch responded that the Assessor's Office and the representative from the project have submitted all the paperwork and she recommended the Board begin negotiations as they have done with other solar projects. Ms. White said there are materials already being moved onto the site and the Board agreed they would move ahead with negotiations next week. The Board then agreed to move the agenda item to the meeting of July 29.

The Board then opened a discussion with Chief Frank and Superintendent Loring regarding **reports of automobiles speeding in the villages, in particular Southfield and Mill River.** Chief Frank reviewed the current actions to address speeding, and noted that in Southfield there is speeding, a lot of traffic, and parking problems. (He also noted that there is no bylaw regulating parking in New Marlborough.) Discussion followed about possible remedies at the bottom of East Hill Road and in Southfield generally. Audience member Tim Newman added that the problem is difficult to solve, and perhaps the Town should follow Egremont's example and issue so many tickets that New Marlborough gets a reputation for being tough on speeders. There was further discussion of specific remedies of signage, crosswalks, and a future parking bylaw.

Traffic problems and possible solutions in Mill River were also discussed, particularly the right turn from Town Hall to the Mill River Great Barrington Road, which involves a crosswalk, the library, and traffic at the Mill River General Store. Mr. Long suggested that we move ahead with changes and see what works.

Chief Frank then notified the Board that **Hunter Lucey had accepted a full-time position in Sheffield** and his availability will be much less than it used to be. Chief Frank stated he had talked about finding a full-time person instead of using part-timers at the joint

The Board of Selectmen seeks a qualified individual from New Marlborough, who is not an elected or appointed Town official, or employed by the Town, who has experience in Human Resource systems or administration, to participate in a small committee tasked to recommend revisions to New Marlborough's current personnel policies and to formalize a Human Resources system. The work of the committee is to be completed no later than the end of the calendar year. If you are interested in volunteering for this position, please contact Sharon Fleck at SFleck@newmarlboroughma.gov by August 9, 2019.

meeting of the Board and the Finance Committee last year. Mr. Yohalem suggested that he sit down with Ms. Enoch to tally the expenses for part-timers versus the cost of a full-time person to see if it can fit in the budget.

The Board then approved the following appointments beginning immediately and ending June 30, 2020:

Michelle Dawson, Board of Registrars

Larry Burke, assistant right to know officer

Ed Harvey, emergency management director

Mr. Yohalem requested a list of open positions for the next meeting that still need to be appointed. Ms. Fleck listed the following: assistant gas inspector, assistant plumbing inspector, Umpachene Falls Commission and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission delegate. Mr. Yohalem stated that he had spoken with Jan Johnson of the Agricultural Commission who stated she would continue if other members were interested in continuing. Ms. Fleck stated that Eli Cook had committed, but she had yet to contact Tom Brazie.

The discussion then moved on to employee compensation. Mr. Yohalem stated they heard back from Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard, who revised his opinion regarding the Town Clerk's compensation and said it was the intent of the voters at Town Meeting to increase the Town Clerk's compensation by 5 percent; the current payroll now reflects that increase.

Mr. Yohalem then recommended a **formal committee be developed to review and address** the personnel policy and human resources in the Town. He recommended three people be on the committee: a member of the Finance Committee, a Town employee, and an independent person from town who is not an official or employee of the Town, who has experience dealing with personnel. He added that Ms. Enoch be the committee's resource person. These three people would review and revise personnel policy and prac-

tices by the end of December.

Mr. Long suggested they ask that the volunteer from town have and submit prior HR experience. He also stated he thought one of the selectmen should be on the committee or working with the committee.

Ms. Enoch asked the Board to clarify whether the employee position on the committee should be someone who is directly affected by the personnel policy rather

than someone who works on a Town committee and is paid compensation. The Board agreed someone who is a full- or part-time employee and paid a salary should be the criteria for the employee position. Mr. Long noted that the Board has previously discussed

the need for independent HR expertise. He has identified at least two firms and believes there are more HR consulting companies in the state that work with municipalities and their costs should be researched. Mr. Yohalem recommended the committee also look at the HR issue in sharing services with other towns. Ms. White has spoken with Egremont and Sheffield, and Sheffield is interested in sharing an HR position. Ms. White recommended Mr. Long continue to investigate the HR consultants.

Mr. Long stated that job descriptions must be developed and assess the present individuals' expertise. Once those are done, a comparative wage study can be initiated; it can be repeated every five years or so.

Ms. Enoch asked the Board to outline what the committee was charged to do, in order to assist in her request for an outside volunteer. The Board agreed that the committee would review and revise personnel policies and practices. Mr. Long will continue to investigate HR consulting companies. The Board agreed on an August 7 cutoff date for applicants to submit their name and HR experience.

Ms. Enoch then spoke about the lack of consistency of the time sheets employees submit. **Discussion en-**

A formal committee is being established to review the personnel policy and human resources practices.

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sued about eligibility for compensatory time or overtime, hourly versus salary compensation, and hours required for job completion. Mr. Long suggested that more homework is needed on these issues. Mr. Yohalem stated that until the Board received formal recommendations from a human resources committee, it would be guided, except for the town clerk, by the hours currently assigned to Town Hall positions.

The building inspector, Owen Wright, who was in the audience, stated he is paid a salary, but he tracks his hours because it helps determine what it takes to get the job done. Mr. Yohalem stated that records need to be kept so the Town will know what is required to get the work done.

The Board then moved onto the minutes with the following actions: they approved the minutes of meetings on June 19, June 27, and July 8. They held the minutes of the June 24 meeting, and are waiting for minutes from the July 1 and 11 meetings with the Finance Committee.

The town administrator updated the Board about ads that have been placed for the new highway department position and a part-time police officer. She reminded the Board of the need to find an ADA coordinator and a replacement for the animal control officer who has resigned. Sheffield, she said, may want to work with New Marlborough to find a new officer.

Ms. White stated she had spoken with Tom Stalker at the Commission on Disabilities meeting last week and had suggested they shorten the list of responsibilities for the ADA coordinator, which seemed excessive. Mr. Yohalem suggested seeing if there was any interest by a current employee in pursuing the necessary training and add the position to their current work.

Board of Selectmen updates included the continuing work on Route 57. Mr. Long has contacted Beta Engineering to discuss next steps. He stated Sandisfield is interested pursuing a MassWorks grant with New

Marlborough for Route 57, and Mr. Long will work with Superintendent Loring to get the application done. Mr. Yohalem noted that the letters of recommendation for the grant should be done now.

The Board then moved onto the mail. The Board of Assessors submitted their approval of the Assessors clerk's salary increase of 5 percent. Next there was an announcement from the Assessors clerk that the office would be closed the weeks of July 29 and August 12. The Board asked that the announcement be given to the Board of Assessors for their approval.

The Board discussed receipt of an application for a special permit for a home real estate office sign, but there were no details included. The

Board asked the application be returned and completed before they address it.

Mr. Yohalem stated he had requested there be a meeting of the SBRSD Roundtable for the purpose of discussing consolidation of schools and expected it to be held by the end of the month.

The Board signed financial warrants and approved an alcohol application. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m. □

Sandra Fusco Walker

Mr. Long and Superintendent Loring will prepare the grant application for continuing work on Route 57, in conjunction with the Town of Sandisfield.

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OFFICE OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN
807 Mill River Southfield Road, Mill River, MA 01244**

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Nathaniel H. Yohalem, Chair
Tara B. White
Richard E. Long
Board of Selectmen

Mr. Stephen Bannon, School Committee Chair
Berkshire Hills Regional School District
50 Main Street P. O. Box 617
Stockbridge, MA 01262

June 26, 2019

Dear Chair Bannon:

Your June 7, 2019 letter was discussed at our Board of Selectmen's June 17, 2019 meeting. While we applaud your School District's goal and intentions, we do not think the June 6, 2019 motion goes far enough and runs the risk of more lengthy and complicated committee meetings.

We suggest that two small committees (one for each District) be formed to discuss how to consolidate both Districts not whether there should be consolidation. Our recommendation is to have three members on each committee – the District School superintendent, a member of the School Committee and a representative of the member towns. To be clear, there would be one person representing all member towns and not a representative from each town. We do that in labor negotiations with unions and it has worked well.

Each committee would seek input from school employees, such as business managers, principals, teachers, and the member towns in the Districts, etc. The planning would include, among other items, vocational education, use of building facilities, existing debt, building improvements, transportation, etc.

Our point is that this issue has been talked about for a number of years with minimal results. Let's also put a timeline on when to expect a proposed plan to assure this process does not take several more years.

One final point. New Marlborough is one of five towns in our District. It represents about 20 per cent (20%) of the budget. This letter sets forth the position of the New Marlborough Board of Selectmen. It does not purport to express the response of any of the other four member towns or the School Committee.

We applaud your efforts and believe both Districts can and should work together to consolidate.

Sincerely,
Nathaniel H. Yohalem, Chair
Tara B. White
Richard Long

cc: Towns of Sheffield, Monterey, Egremont, Alford
Jane Burke Beth Regulbuto Peter Dillon

View From the Board HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU!

You elect the three members of the Board of Selectmen to be the executives of the Town of New Marlborough and to represent you. The Board usually meets on Mondays at 6:00 p.m. in Town Hall. With few exceptions, almost no one attends those meetings.

I can't say that I blame you for not attending. The meetings conflict with dinner and can easily last two hours or more. The items to be discussed and acted upon are determined by the Board's chairman who sets the agenda with input from the other Board members and the town administrator. The agenda is posted at least two business days in advance of the meeting at Town Hall and on the Town's website.

Those agenda items usually deal with the budget, personnel, department head reports, school issues, grant applications, approval of minutes, and other meetings attended by the individual selectmen. On occasion, however, we deal with issues raised by individual town residents.

A few examples: A few winters ago, I was with someone in the Mill River General Store parking lot. She told me she didn't know if she could afford to pay her heating bill that month. When I got to Town Hall, I spoke to our staff, and they came up with a list of the names,

addresses, and phone numbers of organizations in the area that provided free necessities — from clothing to shelter or, in some cases, financial assistance. The list was printed and mailed to all homeowners with their next tax bill.

On numerous occasions the tax collector has worked out payment plans for taxpayers who are either delinquent in paying real estate taxes or due to unforeseen circumstances need additional time to pay a current bill.

Then just recently, a number of residents voiced their concerns about speeding cars, particularly near the Southfield Store and the town library. The Board heard you. As I write this column, a meeting with the Board, the police chief, and the highway superintendent has been placed on the Board's July 15 agenda to address the problem.

I realize that some people do not want to discuss personal problems in public or don't have the time to attend a Board meeting. So, here's my offer. Call me at 528-1409 and let's talk over a cup of coffee at the General Store so that your issue can be considered. What's the deal? I'm buying.*

Nat Yohalem

*Some restrictions may apply. Offer good for thirty days.



Saturdays at 4:30 pm Through October 5th.

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August 24, 4:30pm

RHYTHM FUTURE QUARTET

"[B]reaks new ground for Gypsy jazz," *The Boston Globe*. "Jason Anick is a star in the world of jazz violin," *Downbeat* magazine. The Hot Club of Paris comes to New Marlborough.



September 7, 4:30pm

CAROL WINCENC FLUTE LORA TCHEKORATOVA PIANO

A sneak preview of Carol's Golden Anniversary Legacy Series. An 'impeccable flute soloist,' *The New York Times*, meets a pianist whose 'energy swept the audience along with her,' *The Washington Post*. 21st century contemporary premieres meet Bach, Messiaen, Debussy and more.

September 14, 4:30pm
EMMANUEL CEYSSON HARP
Principal harpist of the Metropolitan Opera. "Both his technique and his musicianship are virtually flawless," *The Washington Post*. Repertoire to include Bach, Liszt, Debussy, Schumann, Rameau along with contemporary works.



September 21, 4:30pm
DAN TEPFER PIANO
GOLDBERG VARIATIONS / VARIATIONS

Jazz Variations on the Goldberg Variations. "This is no stunt but a fresh musical exploration," *The New York Times*. "Tepfer... makes Bach a colleague in joy," *Jazz Times*.



September 28, 4:30pm

BERKSHIRE CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Captivating local choirs with the sons and daughters of the community. 3 Choirs, from first to twelfth grades. Classics, folk, spirituals and contemporary choral ring through the Meeting House rafters.



October 5, 4:30pm

AUTHOR'S TALK: GARRISON KEILLOR

There has been no sabbatical. Post-*A Prairie Home Companion*, Keillor has written a musical called *The Lives of the Cowboys*, a memoir entitled *So Far So Good*, even stacks of limericks. All this and more, in conversation with Simon Winchester.

Receptions with the artists after the performances. Art Gallery shows through October 6th

For tickets & information: www.newmarlborough.org / (413) 229-2785

A JAZZIER TEMPO FOR MUSIC & MORE

As Ben Harms, president of the New Marlborough Village Association (NMVA), began planning for Music & More's 2019 season, a venerated series that has been presented at the Meeting House since 1991, he realized that the Village Association was facing a pivotal issue: Since M&M's founding by Harold Lewin, who remained the impresario



Gerald Seligman

for twenty-five years, the programming had consisted, overwhelmingly, of classical music. Although the series had featured some of the world's finest musicians (and treated the concertgoers to complementary wine and cheese after the concert), the audience, like that of many organizations presenting similar programs, had begun to dwindle, a result of an aging audience and changing musical tastes.

Mr. Harms brought his concerns to the NMVA Board, and a consensus was quickly reached: the series, while retaining an allegiance to its classical roots, needed to add programming that would appeal to a broader audience. It also needed to augment its marketing and advertising to reach more potential concertgoers. The challenge was to find someone to work with Mr. Harms and the Board to achieve these objectives.

Enter Gerald Seligman, the Village Association's newly appointed associate artistic director.

Mr. Seligman, 63 and a native New Yorker, is an international music industry professional with more than thirty years' experience in both major and independent music and music events companies. He is currently executive director of the National Recording Preservation Foundation, which, in affiliation with the Library of Congress, preserves and makes accessible the recorded history and culture of the United States. From 2006 to 2009, he was the general director of Berlin-based World Music Expo, an annual event with music conferences, a trade fair, and six stages providing performance venues for more than fifty professional artists. His own company, Caravan Arts Consultancy, collaborates and consults throughout the world to help nurture artists, develop skills, and stimulate an economic space for culture. His broad industry-based background includes founding and running EMI Hemisphere, where he produced or compiled more than 100 releases, including one that received a Grammy nomination. A common thread in his career is a keen interest in introducing audiences to new

music and artists.

"We are thrilled to have Gerald join us as we re-brand and redevelop Music & More," said Mr. Harms. "Gerald brings an unparalleled breadth of experience and music industry contacts, which will allow us to build on Harold Lewin's legacy and create a vibrant series featuring both classical and popular music. We look forward to a long and exciting

collaboration."

"The Meeting House," said Mr. Seligman, "surely must be one of the most beautiful venues in the region. It rightfully holds a venerated place in the community. It's an honor to join the team and work to expand the reach of the series. While Music & More has focused on classical artists, the concerts will now expand to include jazz, folk, Americana, select international artists, and other compatible areas of music." He added, "The key, as always, is to bring to audiences the sorts of artists they love most, while at the same time introducing them to new artists, new genres, new styles that they're likely to appreciate. In fact, a survey of the community revealed a desire for just such an opening, and we'll do our best to fulfill those expectations."

By the time Mr. Seligman had been retained, four of this season's program dates had already been filled, including three afternoons of classical music and the ever-popular interview series, moderated by author Simon Winchester (and which this year will feature Prairie Home Companion's Garrison Keillor.) Mr. Seligman and Board leadership immediately began work to fill the remaining two programs.

"I am thrilled that we have been able to book the young, exciting swing jazz group, Rhythm Future Quartet, and the incredibly talented and dynamic pianist, Dan Tepfer, who will play both classical and jazz renditions of Bach's Goldberg Variations," said Mr. Seligman. "I think that, combined with the classical concerts already scheduled, we will have a series that will appeal to a broad range of audience members who will want to come back again and again."

In addition to programming the season, Mr. Seligman is working on the creation of posters and logos that will help express the new approach at Music & More. He is writing all press and promotional materials, reaching out to the media to generate publicity and interviews, and managing email blasts and online promotion, in-

cluding video links. He will also assist in the details of production, such as set-up, hospitality, and, where needed, amplification.

"I could not be happier to have the opportunity to work with the Village Association's leadership to build something vibrant and exciting at the great Meeting House in New Marlborough," said Mr. Seligman, "and I look forward to meeting members of our audience and

getting their feedback during the upcoming season. It promises to be extraordinary."

Details of the upcoming season are contained in the advertisement on page 11 of this issue, so go ahead and mark your calendars for the opening concert, Saturday, August 24, at 4:30, featuring the Rhythm Future Quartet. □

Barry R. Shapiro

ELIHU BURRITT DAY

Saturday, August 17

The annual celebration of Elihu Burritt Day, honoring New Marlborough's "learned blacksmith" and peace activist, is taking place from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on August 17 on the New Marlborough Village Green, sponsored by the New Marlborough Cultural Council. As usual, activities will include entertainment, hayrides, a wide variety of crafts, books, baked goods, and white elephants for sale, and a pet parade.

At 10:00 a.m. the pet parade will form and start off, while the other exhibitors and vendors get under way on the village green. Antiques appraiser Charles Flint will join us once again from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; attendees can bring items for appraisal or photos of larger items, and Mr. Flint will provide an estimate of value. Charge for a single item is \$5, or \$10 for three items; proceeds go directly to support Cultural Council grant activities. Hayrides will be available throughout the day, offered by Tom Brazie. Roger the Jester will be on hand at 11:00 a.m. to entertain young and old. Olivia Marchione will be doing face painting throughout the day. This year there'll also be live music by the acoustic duo Moonshine Holler (10:00 a.m. to noon) and guitarist Kevin Smith (12:30 to 2:30 p.m.).

At noon there will be the presentation of the annual Elihu Burritt Award for Community Service. This year's recipient is *The New Marlborough 5 Village News*, our monthly newsletter which is now in its twentieth

year. The Cultural Council treasurer, Richard Long, and State Representative Smitty Pignatelli will present the award to Larry Burke, chairman of the paper's Board of Directors.

The library's Book and Bake Sale, sponsored by the New Marlborough Friends of the Library, will offer a huge display of used books, CDs, and DVDs for sale, as well as a tempting array of baked goods. Proceeds will support expanded library programs.

The Cultural Council's White Elephant Sale sports the motto "If we don't have it, you don't need it," with tables full of odd bits of just about everything. There will also be a Silent Auction for items of value greater than what is usually found at a white elephant sale.

The Fire Department and First Responders will be on site to demonstrate their equipment and services. They'll also be selling tickets to the annual Pig Roast and raffle which will take place at 5:00 p.m. at the fire house in Southfield.

Most important: Come to relax and hang out with your friends and neighbors. Have some good food provided by the Food Cart, the Southfield Store, and the Flour Bin. Pet a bunny, or a sheep, or a donkey, or one of the many dogs in attendance. Go on a hayride. Have fun. Burritt Day is a rain-or-shine event, but hopefully last year's deluge won't be repeated and everyone can enjoy the full day. □

Barbara Lowman



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SIGN UP

A Unique Opportunity for a Free 911 Sign

Brandon Wilson's got your number. Your 911 house number, that is, and he will mount it outside your residence at no cost to you.

This one-time opportunity is being made possible through the initiative of Brandon Wilson and the generosity of the Fire Company, the First Responders, and American Legion Post 350. Brandon, a seventeen-year-old who lives in Clayton, noticed that a lot of properties in town lack a 911 sign, and he has designed a project around providing the signs as the final satisfaction of requirements to earn the coveted rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America. A grant from Fire and Rescue and Post 350 will cover the purchase of the signs.

Here is how it will work: In the next few weeks, Brandon will survey New Marlborough residences, leaving a letter with those lacking the 911 sign that asks whether the property owner wants a sign. If so, the owner will give Brandon the house number and in-



Brandon Wilson
photo by Joe Poindexter

structions as to placement. Once the responses are in, the signs will be ordered using the grant, and then Brandon will put them up.

The Eagle Scout badge is no small accomplishment. Brandon, who has been a Scout since first grade (he enters his senior year at Mount Everett High School in September), has earned all but two or three of the twenty-one merit badges required and must complete the 911 sign project before he turns eighteen on November 13.

Meanwhile, the project is a win for New Marlborough residents. State law requires dwellings and business establishments to be marked by a number visible from the nearest street or road. Residences without a number will become illegal (though no one we know of has been ticketed for this oversight), and even those with one will profit from the clearly designed visibility of the 911 sign. Best of all, the signs are free.

Every once in a while, procrastination pays. □
Joe Poindexter



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LAND TRUST NEWS

The Land Trust has roughed out a loop trail at the new Goodnow Preserve, which connects the trailhead at the base of Collins Hill to the Lower Carroll Mill. The trail builds on the existing wood roads and is our first effort of many at making the new preserve accessible and enjoyable for the public. The route starts in the expansive open fields, wanders through the deciduous forest past a stunning network of stone walls, lands at the mill ruins, loops back following the Konkapot River and then climbs uphill to the lower pasture and back to the start. The trail offers opportunities to walk the distance or to walk a portion and to stop and cool off with a dip in the Konkapot. We will need your help and are hoping to gather a crew of trail volunteers to mark and clear the route in the next few weeks. If you are available, please let us know at nmlandtrust@gmail.com and watch for our work party post with a scheduled date and time. We are so grateful to our volunteers who have accomplished so much, including establishing the popular loop at the New Marlboro Preserve.

Don't miss the second part of this summer's "learning about trees." Michael Gaige, conservation biologist and educator, will share his passion and knowledge of "wolf trees" on August 3, 9:00 a.m., at the New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery.

As the summer heat bears down, escape to the shade of a woodland trail. Lose your mind and iphone. Enter the sounds and smells of the woods.

Finally, check out the drone view of the Goodnow Preserve created by Odie Fields on our new website, nmlandtrust.org. It is a special visual, the creative work of our young generation, technology, and the outdoors. Imagine the future possibilities! □

Martha Bryan



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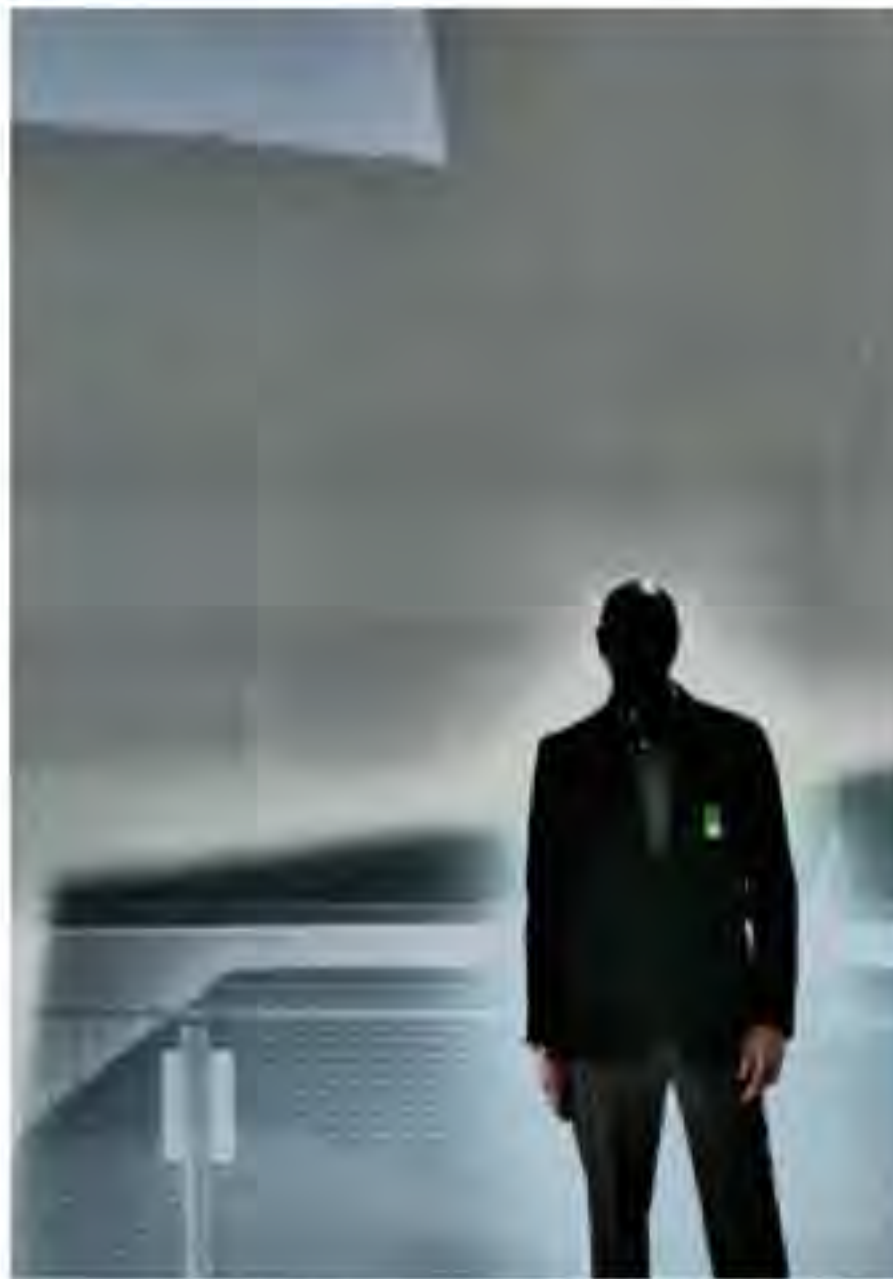
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NEW MARLBOROUGH ARTISTS SHOW

As a spot for artists of the five villages to really shine, the annual New Marlborough Artists exhibit can't be beat. This year seven artists have accepted the invitation and each will have a serious stretch of gallery space to show more of what they do. It's an exciting time for both artists and visitors.

Ritch Holben never fails to engage and delight viewers with his elegant photography, and this year he'll be presenting a series of large-scale prints from a photo series done at the Corning Museum of Glass. He refers to them as "modern and abstract" and expects that they'll "shake it up a bit!" Our elegant and austere antique Meeting House seems like the perfect place for their unveiling.

This will be the first opportunity for the community to see the soulful animal paintings of our new neighbor, Caryn King. New to this area after a recent move to Southfield from South Newfane, Vermont, Caryn was a professional sculptor, teacher, illustrator, and administrator before turning to painting full time. Her chosen painting focus, primarily farm animals, suits her sensibility well as she manages to




respectfully and unsentimentally go beneath the surface of her subjects. "My hope is that the viewer realizes how individual and unique each animal is," she says. The arrival of Ms. King, along with husband Rick, Jengo the cat, and dogs, Ruby and Elby, seems meant to be, as it coincides so well with New Marlborough's flourishing and healthful embrace of all things farming.

Also in this show will be a good variety of work including photographs by Nikki Hayes, etchings by Shelley Haven, and paintings by Carol Majkowski, Abbe Stahl Steinglass, and Robert Forte.

The public is invited to come celebrate our creative neighbors with an opening reception on Friday, August 30, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The show runs from August 31 to October 6. The gallery is open Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. □

Ann Getsinger

Above, Caryn King stands before her paintings of cows. Left, "Ken in the Museum," photo by Ritch Holben.



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Upcoming: Events Calendar for June and July

August 2: Witchcraft in early New England, a New Marlborough Historical Society First Friday program, presented by former Yale History Professor John Demos, 7:30 p.m. at the Meeting House Gallery, with wine and cheese after the program, free and open to the public

August 3: White Elephant Collection, for the Elihu Burritt Day White Elephant sale, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at the barn of The Farm New Marlborough on New Marlborough Southfield Road

August 10: White Elephant Collection, and the last opportunity to pay heed to your inner Marie Kondo for the Elihu White Elephant sale, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at the barn of The Farm New Marlborough on New Marlborough Southfield Road

August 17: Elihu Burritt Day, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the New Marlborough Village Green, followed by the **Fire Department Annual Pig Roast**, at the Firehouse in Southfield village, 5:00 p.m. until the band goes home

August 24: The Rhythm Blues Quartet, the opening of the 2019 season of Music & More on a swing jazz note, 4:30 p.m. at the New Marlborough Meeting House, followed by a reception in the Meeting House Gallery; \$25, \$20 to members of the Village Association

August 30: New Marlborough Artists, an invitational show open to residents of our town; opening reception, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.; on view Saturdays and Sundays, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. until October 6

September 6: Discovering Early 20th Century New Marlborough: How our town became a destination for weekenders and second homeowners, a First Friday program sponsored by the New Marlborough Historical Society, 7:30 p.m. at the Meeting House Gallery, with wine and cheese after the program, free and open to the public

September 7: Carol Wincenc, flute, and Lora Tchekorotova, piano, play Bach, Messiaen, and Debussy in a Music & More presentation at the Meeting House, 4:30 p.m., followed by a reception in the Meeting House Gallery; \$25, \$20 to members of the New Marlborough Village Association

September 14: Harpist Emmanuel Ceysson plays Rameau, Bach, Schumann, Debussy, and contemporary works, a Music & More concert at the Meeting House, 4:30 p.m., \$25, \$20 to members of the New Marlborough Village Association, followed by a reception in the Meeting House Gallery

September 21: Pianist Dan Tepfer switches in and out of jazz in his interpretation of J. S. Bach's supremely contrapuntal Goldberg Variations, Music & More's Harold Lewin Memorial Concert at the Meeting House, 4:30 p.m., \$25, \$20 to members of the New Marlborough Village Association, followed by a reception in the Meeting House Gallery

September 28: Berkshire Children's Choir, local girls and boys under the direction of Karen Sovak and Julie Bickford present classics, folk, spiritual, and contemporary songs in full-throated harmony, a Music & More concert free and open to the public, 4:30 p.m. at the Meeting House

NEIGHBORS



She's still at it! **Elise Richman**, of Southfield, has been applying her horticultural skills to two small public gardens in town for years. In 2009 she began the "East Hill garden," the triangle at the intersection of East Hill and Norfolk Roads, and has been tending it for a decade. Each spring she repairs the rearrangement of the plantings caused by snowplow activity, and replaces some bulbs. Since 2015 she has been tending "The Cauldron" at the intersection of Route 57 and the New Marlborough Southfield Road, originally started by **Teena Parton**. She's helped in this effort by **Alvin Stalker** who waters the plants as needed – "The Cauldron" requires more watering than in-ground plants. Thanks to all of you for providing some bright colors!



photo by Michael Richman

Elise Richman



photo by Elzbieta Matyni

Judith Friedlander

Judith Friedlander, of Mill River, has added to New Marlborough's literary output with the February publication of *A Light in Dark Times: The New School for Social Research and its University in Exile*, published by Columbia University Press. This is the centennial year of The New School, which was founded in New York City by a group of progressive midwesterners, writers for the newly-founded New Republic, and Columbia professors. Its basic principle was to promote and defend the pure concept of "free speech", encouraging the expression of a wide variety of ideas, many of which were in conflict with each other. That tradition continues today, in contrast to some academic policies of filtering out any speech that might be offensive to anyone.

Judy, who was dean of the graduate program in social sciences at The New School from 1993 to 2000, felt that this history needed to be written. It's not an official history, and its publication in the centennial year is just a testimony to the amount of time consumed by Judy's research. "It's a swashbuckling tale from the start," she said, "and that continues today. There has been no shortage of colorful characters."

The book is available at the New Marlborough Library, and Judy had high praise for Librarian **Deb O'Brien**, who functioned as a researcher of obscure details through interlibrary loans. Two examples: 1) finding that Harold Laski in 1948 wrote the introduction to the British Labour Party's centennial publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, and 2) locating the first unabridged edition in English of *Mein Kampf*. Maybe Deb has a new career in the offing!



Harry Fracasso

This past month has been saddened by the deaths of several New Marlborough residents:

Harry Fracasso, of Alum Hill Road, Clayton, passed away on June 19 at the age of eighty-three. Born in Winsted, Connecticut, in 1936, he enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1954. He served in the Air-Sea Rescue until his honorable discharge in 1957. While working for Ness Security at Becton Dickinson in Canaan, Connecticut, he met and then married Marilyn Fedell in 1984. They celebrated their thirty-fifth anniversary in April.

Harry worked for Sims-Echo Farms in Simsbury, Connecticut, for several years, and then for Pete's Sales and Service in Sheffield until his retirement in 1998. In 2004 he surprised Marilyn with a horse – and then a second one. While the horses were boarded at home, Harry loved doing barn chores, and continued to enjoy keeping the home front neat as a pin. He happily shared space with his dogs, Ellie and Jessie, and Rusty, the cat.

Hollis Bush McNulty, a quintessential mother, passed away on June 23 at the age of seventy. She raised six children in New Marlborough with her husband, **Les Bush**; spending time with her children was her great joy. As they grew up, Hollis joined the New Marlborough Fire and Rescue team and became the first female firefighter in that department's history.

She married **Steven McNulty** in 1993, and joined him in raising his three children in Ashley Falls. She then moved on to become a licensed daycare



Hollis McNulty

provider, which she continued for fifteen years. Following that, she and Steven became foster parents to a number of children; they grew to love two of them so deeply that they decided to adopt and raise them. Two friends reflect on Hollis's warmth and desire to nurture and serve:

Marsha Harvey has known her for years: "Hollis Twing Bush McNulty was a special lady. I have known her since grade school. Although often soft-spoken, she could make herself heard when something was important. Hollis cared about all people and wanted to help. She was a member of the New Marlborough Ladies' Fire Auxiliary and the New Marlborough First Responders, but that wasn't enough: She became the first female fire fighter in the Town of New Marlborough.

"She cared about all people, but especially her children and grandchildren, but that, too, wasn't enough for Hollis. She ran a daycare program out of her home and ended up adopting some of her daycare babies. Hollis was strong, courageous, and one of the most caring people I know. We will miss her."

Dan Litchfield III remembers her work in the fire department: "I first met Hollis thirty-seven years ago through our mutual ties to the New Marlborough Fire Department, where Hollis would routinely assist the organization in a support role. As I got to know Hollis, I was amazed by her dedication to her six children and the effort she put forth in their lives providing them with a safe and happy childhood. It was this selfless style of commitment that would later lead her to join the Department as its first female firefighter.

"As her children grew into adulthood and required less of her time, Hollis decided she was ready to start a new adventure and take on a bigger role in the Department, moving from a support role to an active on-call participant. It was then that Hollis officially announced her intention to become the Department's first female firefighter.

"This was no easy undertaking in a male-dominated Department, but she proved to be up to the task right from the start. Her gentle nature and willingness to learn endeared her to her fellow firefighters, and before long she had completed the requirements needed to become a full-time firefighter, and was issued her first set of turnout gear. I'll never forget the look of accomplishment and pride on her face that day.

"Hollis continued to serve with honor and devotion for many years and distinguished herself as an essential part of the Department and its mission. She was a true trailblazer and should always be remembered for her dedication and contributions to the people of the Town of New Marlborough."



Sharon Koneazny

Sharon Koneazny, of Southfield, died unexpectedly on July 10 at the age of fifty-one. She was raised in Salisbury, Connecticut, and graduated from the University of Connecticut with a bachelor's degree in general studies. She took a summer job at the Snack Shack in Canaan, and met her future husband, **Jim Koneazny**, while scooping ice cream. Together they raised five children; her strong Catholic faith and generous spirit made their home full of creative activity, and welcoming to family and friends. In the early 1990s, Sharon owned and operated TK Specialties, an advertising specialties firm, but after the birth of their first child, she sold the company and joined Jim in managing Peerless Tree Service. She obtained a degree as a turf specialist from Purdue University, and as the office manager at Peerless, she also coordinated the pest control and turf management crews for the company.

Her warmth, wit, and offbeat sense of humor, combined with her faith and caring for others, make her sudden passing a difficult adjustment for family, friends, and colleagues.

Mike Levitas, who died on June 22 at his home in New Marlborough village at age eighty-nine, was a celebrated journalist who went on to a distinguished career as an editor at the *New York Times*. Behind a newspaperman's veneer of objectivity and often witty skepticism, Mike harbored a deep-seated concern for social welfare. In 1957, six years after graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Brooklyn College, Mike (or Mitchel, if we are referring to the name that appeared on his byline) won a George W. Polk Award for exposing the exploitation of Puerto Rican workers by labor racketeers as a reporter for the *New York Post*. Later on in life, he joined the board of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, an organization devoted to improving the health and living stability of vulnerable city dwellers.

Still a young reporter, Mike won a highly coveted Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, went to *Time* magazine for five years ("a good place to have worked," according to Mike), and in 1965 began a thirty-seven-year stint with the *Times*. He was a writer and editor for the Sunday magazine, then moved on to editorships of the metropolitan desk, "The Week in Review," the Sunday Book Review, and the Op Ed page, "his favorite post," according to Gloria, his wife of sixty-eight years.

Most townspeople, however, know Mike best as the fellow who entertained them at the Award-Winning Authors program that winds up the Music & More series sponsored annually by the New Marlborough Village Association.



Mike Levitas hosting the Award-Winning Authors program

Mike, who spent a dozen years following his “retirement” as a consultant to the Office of Book Development at the *Times*, would bring distinguished non-fiction writers to the Meeting House, while Gloria would leaven the proceedings by getting him to include novelists.

“Mike was a social animal, who loved a party,” says Gloria. But as an editor, “he let people have their voices.” And he never upstaged the subjects of his reporting. In an author’s bio under an article he wrote for the *Times* Sunday Magazine on Lord Gardiner, whose family had owned Gardiner’s Island off the tip of Long Island for eleven generations, he wrote: “Mitchel Levitas is himself the lord of a manor, a heavily mortgaged summer place on Martha’s Vineyard that has been in the family for less than one generation.”

Enid Michelman, formerly of New Marlborough, shares this: “Reminiscing about Mike while flying cross county (with my vodka drink in my hand, of course,) makes me smile. It’s a trite memory compared with other remembrances of our many warm and wonderful dinners chez Levitas. One evening, Mike introduced me to “Peppar” – now not popular but available and a favorite. It was special and he was a special host (and dishwasher extraordinaire.)

“The conversations were always scintillating but now forgotten. Our “Absolut” bond definitely not.”

Leslie Armstrong, of Southfield and New York City, offers these observations: “It is impossible to think about Mike without thinking about Gloria at the same time. They thought each other’s thoughts, finished each other’s sentences and were relentless in their pursuit of new ideas, new places, new things to acquire (always for less than anyone else had spent) both for themselves, their multiple dwellings, and for their ever-extending circle of friends and family towards whom their generosity knew no bounds.

“I met Mike and Gloria in the late 70s. They were intrigued that I was an architect, and I was intrigued by everything they said and did, most especially by their humor, their smarts, and their compassion. I reveled in how they took people on from all facets of life and would help to improve or advance whatever aspect of their lives needed support. I loved their love of food. We entertained one another in New Marlborough, in New York, and on Martha’s Vineyard. I was honored to be invited to renovate one of their houses on the Vineyard. Being the architect for friends can ruin a relationship. Ours was only strengthened.

“Like Gloria, Mike was wickedly bright. His interest in art, politics, history, and all forms of local culture was limitless. We spent Mike’s seventieth birthday at Stonehenge and Mike seemed to know more about how and why Stonehenge was built than the Druids themselves. I will miss the many real and imagined excursions I have taken with Mike, the many meals we have shared, and the love and respect we have had for one another for the last forty years.”

Barbara Winters, formerly of Mill River, probably knew him longest: “Almost sixty years ago I was fortunate enough to meet Mike and Gloria Levitas in Boston. A few months later I came back to live and work in New York. Mike and Gloria moved back to New York soon after, and we became friends. They became the guides in a new life for me.

“Eventually they moved into my apartment building. During that time, I realized that Mike and Gloria were an inseparable unit. This is only possible in the best way when two strong people have strong respect for each other.

“My husband, Marty, and I had a weekend home in the Catskills. We visited each other, both couples happy with their weekend homes. One day, though, Mike called and told Marty that he was going to change our lives! The reason was that he found a house in New Marlborough “close enough to be neighbors, but not too close.” He was right. When we moved, Mike and Gloria saw to it that we met their many friends as we became part of the community. We stayed for about twenty-five years until age told us that we needed to downsize.

“I want to share a recent vignette. A few months ago, while Mike could still venture out of the house, we had lunch at a restaurant. Mike had to leave the table for a moment and on his return trip he plucked a beautiful flower from a vase and presented it with a ceremonial gesture to Gloria. There was the sweetest smile on his face. This is the image I have carved in my memory. We shall sorely miss Mike; fortunately, he will go on living in cherished moments like this.” □

compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

Maybe the excessive heat of July had us all avoiding the outdoors, but for whatever reason, there has not been much in the way of sightings. **John Schreiber** sent along a shot of a **monarch caterpillar** he came across while trekking through the Questing reserve. The milkweed plants have been host to numerous monarchs in all stages, from egg to gorgeous butterfly.

On July 11, a parent who was delivering her child to the Flying Cloud summer program stopped to rescue a turtle in the middle of the road near the transfer station. She thought the turtle was rather unusual, and so brought it with her for inspection by the campers and staff at Flying Cloud. A little online research revealed it to be a full-grown **Eastern wood turtle**, and probably a male, based on the reddish hue of its legs, neck, and tail. As can be noted in the accompanying photograph, the shell, or carapace, appears to be composed of distinctive overlapping scallop-like shells; the underside, or plastron, reveals a dramatic pattern of black patches against a yellow background.

While not being listed as an endangered species, the wood turtle has been diminishing in numbers, largely due to loss of habitat and roadway deaths. It is listed in some states as a “species of concern.” A website called Connecticut Wildlife (wildlifeofct.com) has the following description of this handsome turtle’s existence: “These turtles live in cool streams in deciduous woodlands, in red maple swamps, in marshy meadows and can be found in farm country. Wood turtles breed from March to October, peaking in May and June. They court on land. Males and females approach one another with extended necks. They then lower their heads and swing them back and forth in a performance that can last two hours before the pair heads to shallow streams to mate. Eggs are laid and buried in sandy soil in May or June. A female produces one clutch a season and lays six to eight elliptical eggs with flexible shells. Eggs hatch in September or October. Sometimes hatchlings overwinter in the nest in the north and come out in spring. The gender of baby wood turtles is determined by genetics, unlike many other species where gender is determined by the temperature of the eggs during incubation. Wood turtles reach sexual maturity at about ten years. A wood turtle’s lifespan is thought to be at least 50 years and maybe up to 100 years.”

The story of this particular wood turtle concludes, for the moment anyway, with its being returned to the spot where it had been found, safely placed off the road, in the direction it had been heading.

Finally, going back a little further to early July, and giving a nod to our beautiful flora, **Judy Thompson** sent along a photograph by her son **Scott**, taken during a hike up on Dry Hill, where the copious mountain laurel bushes were in full bloom. The individual flowers of the mountain laurel are a marvel of delicacy and symmetry.



photos by Larry Burke

Eastern wood turtle and wood turtle plastron



photo by John Schreiber

Monarch caterpillar enjoying a meal at Questing



photo by Scott Thompson

Dry Hill mountain laurels

Send your wildlife encounter stories to lburke2@me.com

Thank You to Our Contributors:

Katie Clifford; Hildreth B. McCarthy; Anda & John Hutchins; James & Pilar Oates, Hope Crocker; Ronald & Maria Saunders; Thomas & Linda King; and Jody & Debi Wilkinson, in memory of Sharon Koneazny

THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- | | | | | | |
|---------|------------|---|-----------|---|---|
| June 1 | 4:19 p.m. | A caller reports what sounds like target practice across from her Rhoades and Bailey Road residence. | 7:20 p.m. | A resident reports a bear in the yard of her South Sandisfield Road property. | |
| | 5:11 p.m. | A caller reports a collision with a deer on Underwood Drive. | June 17 | 9:20 a.m. | The Department is alerted as the proprietors of the Mill River General Store try to locate the owner of a child's purple Schwinn bicycle found at the rear of the store. |
| | 5:26 p.m. | A large branch of a tree, reported blocking Canaan Southfield Road, is cleared by the time an officer arrives. | June 18 | 5:36 p.m. | Officer investigates a suspicious vehicle parked on Mill River Great Barrington Road near the Great Barrington border. |
| June 2 | 2:24 a.m. | Tree down blocking entire roadway on Konkapot Road. | June 19 | 3:17 p.m. | An officer helps calm a Hartsville resident, following a report from a postal worker that the resident had threatened him when a package he was expecting did not arrive. |
| | 10:39 a.m. | A caller reports that his kitten was struck by a car speeding past his Hartsville Mill River Road residence. | June 21 | 12:23 p. m. | A resident reports vandalism of a fence around a community pool on Konkapot Road. |
| June 3 | 8:46 p.m. | Officer helps restore peace in a family dispute at a Hartsville residence. | | 3:32 p.m. | A Hartsville resident reports raw eggs broken inside her mailbox. |
| June 4 | 2:02 p.m. | Horses loose on Knight Road. | | 7:27 p.m. | Following the issuance of a restraining order filed against her husband, an officer assists a Clayton resident in the removal of firearms from their house. |
| June 5 | 2:13 a.m. | A Clayton resident requests police assistance when she is awakened by a knock on her front door. | June 22 | 5:19 p.m. | An officer assists the driver of a disabled vehicle on Hartsville New Marlborough Road. |
| June 7 | 6:16 p.m. | A driver, stopped for speeding on Hartsville New Marlborough Road, is issued a criminal complaint for operating a vehicle with a suspended license. | June 24 | 8:00 a.m. | A Clayton Mill River Road resident reports observing a drone hovering over her porch and apparently observing her as she was having her morning coffee. |
| June 10 | 5:09 p.m. | A caller reports that his two dogs have escaped by tunneling under the fence surrounding his Southfield village property. | | 7:23 p.m. | A Southfield resident alerts the Department to a vehicle that has collided with a tree on Canaan Southfield Road, its driver slumped over the steering wheel and only intermittently conscious; subsequent testing reveals an elevated blood-alcohol level. |
| | 7:03 p.m. | A caller complains of a driver running a stop sign at the Iron Bridge at the head of Norfolk Road, forcing her to back off the bridge. | | 8:30 p.m. | An officer contacts the Highway Department after a resident reports a tree down on Cagney Hill Road. |
| June 12 | 9:22 p.m. | A caller reports that a bear has been lying in a cornfield near the foot of Brewer Hill Road for a day or two. | June 25 | 11:23 a.m. | An officer is called to help resolve a child visitation dispute at a residence on Hayes Hill Road. |
| June 13 | 1:36 p.m. | A caller complains that two dirt bike riders are causing a noise disturbance on Alum Hill Road. | June 27 | 2:51 p.m. | A motorist hits a deer on Adsit Crosby Road. |
| | 2:07 p.m. | Officer assists in the helicopter evacuation of an accident victim in a head-on collision in the center of Sheffield. | | 3:25 p.m. | A caller reports a breaking and entering at his residence on Lumbert Cross Road. |
| | 2:48 p.m. | Following a call from a resident, the Highway Department is alerted to a downed tree blocking Rhoades and Bailey Road. | June 29 | 8:43 a.m. | A New Marlborough village resident reports the theft of her purse, possibly from a post office. |
| June 15 | 6:30 p.m. | An officer intercedes when a Hayes Hill Road resident complains of a revved motor noise coming from a vehicle under repair at a neighboring property. | | | |
| June 16 | 5:45 p.m. | The Highway Department is notified of a tree down on Route 57 east of New Marlborough village. | | | |

- 8:59 p.m. Officer assists a motorist, pulled to the side of County Road, with a flat tire.
- June 30 9:59 a.m. Following a complaint from a neighbor, a Clayton Mill River Road resident is asked to remove unauthorized signs

- directing motorists to reduce speed.
- 12:50 p.m. A caller alerts the Department to a vehicle being driven erratically on Knight Road.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

FIRE AND RESCUE

- June 2 11:00 p.m. Norfolk Road Fire Alarm
- June 4 7:23 p.m. Norfolk Road CO Alarm
- June 5 8:53 p.m. Norfolk Road CO Alarm
- June 11 9:53 a.m. New Marlborough Southfield Road Fire Alarm
- June 11 3:59 p.m. Stone Manor Drive Fire Alarm
- June 14 3:12 p.m. Mutual Aid to Sandisfield Ambulance Fire
- June 14 8:09 p.m. Mutual Aid to Sheffield Medical Call
- June 19 11:09 a.m. Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call
- June 19 7:51 p.m. New Marlborough Monterey Road Fire Alarm
- June 22 8:48 p.m. Woodleigh Avenue Fire Alarm
- June 24 7:29 p.m. Canaan Southfield Road MVA
- June 24 12:59 p.m. Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Standby Medical

David Smith

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CONSOLIDATION OR COLLABORATION?

Grappling with Declining Student Enrollment in South County

By Joe Poindexter

Too much real estate, too few students.

This, of course, is not new. Erosion of student populations in South County has been going on for decades. When Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) was formed in the mid-1950s as the first regional school district in the state, a campus was built in Sheffield, but there were elementary schools in all five of the member towns. In 1990, an ambitious building project transformed the Mount Everett building into Undermountain Elementary School, and a new state of the art facility was built for the high school. That campus, built to accommodate up to 1,200 students, had an average enrollment of under 700 in the last five years. Compared to sixty-five to seventy-five graduates in the earliest years, the 2019 graduating class had 44 students. Student enrollment at Berkshire Hills Regional School District (BHRSD), 1,347 in the class of 2018, has slipped by 10 percent over the past five years.

About five years ago, the Berkshire Education Task Force, with representation from throughout the county, was created to seek a solution. Two years ago, after concluding that the challenges facing the towns and cities in the north part of the county differed too greatly from those in the south, the Southern Berkshire Educational Futures Task Force was formed to chart its own pathway to educational excellence.

Then two months ago, the debate over consolidation took on some urgency. A letter, dated June 7, from Steve Bannon, chairman of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District (BHRSD) School Committee, to Jane Burke, his counterpart in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD), called for the creation of a planning board “for the purpose of either forming or consolidating into a regional high school district to serve grades 9-12.” Copies went to the boards of selectmen of the eight member towns of the two districts and asked for a response by July 31.

New Marlborough, however, was already focused on the challenge of a shrinking student population. Nat Yohalem, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, was asking not whether to consolidate but how. And his vision was quite a bit more ambitious than Mr. Bannon’s: merger of not just the high schools but the entire educational effort, from kindergarten to twelfth grade. In its June 26 response to the Bannon letter (see page 12), the Board of Selectmen requested the formation of a three-person committee in each District, comprised of the District superintendent, a school committee member, and a single citizen. The two committees would then, presumably,

combine their thinking on now to accomplish a merger.

the ball is rolling. Now comes the hard part: the nitty-gritty details. Asked whether he prefers a planning board, which is what is prescribed by Massachusetts General Law as a first step in achieving regionalization, to the streamlined committees described by the New Marlborough Board of Selectmen, Mr. Bannon said, “I would be fine with whatever works.” His committee, he said, focused on high school consolidation because it believed that the narrower combination “would be more palatable to the Southern Berkshire people,” than consolidation of kindergarten through twelfth grade. (A more skeptical view holds that BHRSD needed to be joined by a second district to qualify for state funds to build a new high school — the present building has long needed to be replaced.)

Jane Burke takes a somewhat broader view of the challenges facing South County. The two-year-old Berkshire Educational Futures Task Force, on which she served, made no progress with discussions of consolidation. Instead they opted for collaboration among four south county districts, Southern Berkshire Regional, Berkshire Hills Regional, Lenox, and Lee, on such things as vocational training and special education, “things that are impractical for a single district to accomplish on its own,” she said.

But Ms. Burke holds that the issue of consolidation or collaboration needs to be preceded by a more fundamental question: “What does good education, going forward, look like?” She believes it will not resemble the present model, the standardized curricula driven by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and the emphasis on advance placement courses. “They have created a false education narrative,” said Ms. Burke.

The SBRSD School Committee is proposing a joint committee with Berkshire Hills, five members from each School Committee, to guide the debate toward not just affordability but educational excellence. But then, the entire effort may depend on the answer to an even more basic question, as Ms. Burke put it: “Whether an environment of trust exists between the two Districts to go forward with any discussion on a joint effort.”

The ideal solution to the puzzle of too much real estate, too few students would seem to depend on a rare blend of urgency, patience, and good will. That might take a miracle, but every family in South County will be rooting for it. □

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

It's Tomato Time

Is there anything better about summer than fresh tomatoes? In Australia we mostly grew cherry tomatoes in pots, but now that we have a big veggie patch, one bed is always dedicated to a variety of heirlooms.

My favourite is Brandywine but really, anything straight from the vine and warm from the sun tastes amazing. I like to keep it simple, with some sliced tomato on toast with a bit of salt, pepper and sugar being my favourite late summer lunch.

This recipe is one that the whole family enjoys. It's so quick to prepare and easy, with no cooking, hardly any mess, and most of it can be home grown or locally sourced. But it looks and tastes a little bit special. □

Fiona Kerr

Tomato and Mozzarella Salad

Ingredients:

- Fresh tomatoes, sliced into 1/4 inch slices
- Basil, 1 leaf per tomato slice
- Mozzarella, 1 small piece/slice per tomato slice
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Directions:

Lay the tomato slices on a plate or serving board, sprinkle with salt and pepper, top with a piece of mozzarella and the basil leaf. Drizzle with a bit of olive oil and serve.

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SUMMER AT THE LIBRARY

It's been a busy summer at the library. On July 13 Jake Levin did a talk and book-signing for *Smoke House Handbook*. The Summer Reading Program ran from July 8 through 11: Fifteen children and their teenage helpers were treated to a variety of workshops centering on the theme of "Space." *photos by Deb O'Brien*



The first Cookbook Club meeting on July 18. Another is planned for August 29 at 6:00 p.m. Cookbook to be announced.



Zac Adams, Mass Audubon



Sound Explorers



Teen helpers



Jake Levin - Book Signing

Summer Library Hours

Mon. Wed. Sat.
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Board of Selectmen: Every other Monday until September 9 at 6:00 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Board of Assessors: Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Post Office: Mill River (413) 229-8582

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

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

Southfield (413) 229-8476

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

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

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

Tax Collector: Monday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. until Labor Day

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

Dog and Animal Control Officer: New Marlborough Police Department 229-8161

Town Clerk: 229-8278; 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment

Town Hall: 229-8116

Police: Business office: 229-8161

Library: 229-6668

Transfer Station Hours:

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

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

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

PERMITS ARE DUE JULY 1

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

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Police, Fire, Medical
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Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.

Hours:

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

PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244

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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

Barbara Lowman, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer; Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Larry Burke, Jackson Liscombe, David Lowman, Joe Poindexter, Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Anne M. Sommers, Sandra Fusco-Walker
Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger, Angus Kerr, Fiona Kerr, Mary Richie Smith, Catherine Twing, Tara White, and Michele Shalaby. Index: Donna Weaver

New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

also online at www.nm5vn.org

The next issue will be dated September 2019.

All copy must be submitted no later than August 17.

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

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