



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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A REAL-LIFE CHARLOTTE’S WEB

Animal Control Officer Cassie Keeley Lets Her Menagerie Do the Talking

by Robbi Hartt

Approaching Cassie and Jim Keeley’s farm on Foley Hill Road is a little like ordering a farm-fresh breakfast from a food truck in New York City — you know it’s possible to find rarities like this, but they still feel surreal when you discover them. Grinding up the bumpy driveway requires extra care, not only for the car’s shocks but also to avoid the assemblage of animals surrounding their home. Ryker, a German Shepherd puppy, is the first greeter this particular morning; followed quickly by Wilbur, a chocolate Lab; Joey and Pi, the cats; Grace, the squawking Chinese goose; and a trail of Pekin and Indian Runner ducks.

The whole picture is like a chapter from *Charlotte’s Web*, each of the animals communicating with the others in a language that Cassie clearly understands. “Everyone always blames me,” Cassie shrugs, surveying the farm animals, “but Jim’s in it, too, for sure.” Indeed, Jim, her husband of thirteen years, contributed his fair share to this menagerie, which, in addition to the animals mentioned above, includes two cockatiels, two guinea pigs, two horses, five donkeys, countless Americano chickens, guinea fowl, and a betta fish.



Cassie Keeley with two of her five donkeys

photo by Robbi Hartt

Each animal has an unusual name (Fern, Humphrey, Beep Beep, Boo) and most were rescued. “Everyone gets along,” Cassie boasts, a comment that reflects the animals’ and humans’ mutual understanding. Daughter, Delanie, helps tend the farm animals while sons, Hunter and Chaice, are both avid fishermen (in fact, Hunter has his own Instagram account and Facebook page titled “Berkshire Backwater”). More to the point, it is this preternatural ease with the fauna in her life that led, in July, to Cassie’s appointment as New Marlborough’s animal control officer.

Although Cassie is new to her position, caring for animals has been a lifelong passion. “I’m forty-eight years old, and I’ve always had animals,” she confesses, recalling the five dogs her family had when she was growing up. The only time she was without pets was when, just before meeting Jim, she lived in a condo in Torrington where dogs were not allowed. When they married and moved to Foley Hill, Cassie discovered farm animals. “It was like a whole new world opened up for me,” she says. “I was leading exercise classes [Kick It with Cassie at the Southfield Church] but going animal crazy in the background, like a fish that had finally found her pond.” Shortly after losing a goat and a cow in the same week, Jim and Cassie noticed that Lacy, their donkey, was getting depressed; they began rescuing animals to find her the

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Cassie Keeley, continued

perfect friend. “That’s how all of this started,” she says. Although she declares a love of every animal on the farm, Humphrey, the draft mule, is her favorite — gentle and sweet, despite his intimidating size, and rescued directly from the kill pen.

Early on, Cassie took a course in clicker training for dogs, the use of a clicker in combination with treats, at the Sand Road Animal Hospital in Canaan and then applied its techniques to all of her other animals. Seeing the animals offer a kiss, a hug, and a Covid-friendly fist bump, as Delanie instructs them quietly, is a remarkable feat. Cassie’s passion and instincts evolved into a formal role. When she saw an ad for the animal control officer position in Sheffield in March, though she had little hope of being selected, she was excited by the possibilities and applied. “Are you afraid of rabid raccoons?” one of the selectmen asked. Her confidence and innate sense of how to handle all types of animals made a favorable impression, and she was hired.

Not long thereafter, Cassie was notified that a bear had entered the kitchen of a residence in Ashley Falls. Approaching the bear, she confidently relied on the reasoning she employs with her teenage children. “You know you’re not supposed to be here,” she chided in an assertive yet respectful tone. The bear quietly left!

Her position in Sheffield, under the supervision of the Police Department, comes with valuable support. “They offered to send me to school,” says Cassie, “but because of Covid-19 restrictions with group classes, I need to educate myself for the time being.” In fact, she is taking online classes and studying Massachusetts laws relating to farm, domestic, and wild animals. Her most important education, however, comes from phone conversations with town residents and state and local wildlife officials. Each call she receives requires research to determine the right answer, often involving networking with the Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife Department and envi-



Delanie Keeley communes with Humphrey

photo by Robbi Hartt



The Keeley's Chinese geese

photo by Robbi Hartt

ronmental police officers. She also credits the lengthy exchanges she has had with the Massachusetts Bear Biologist Dave Wattles.

In early May, Cassie helped New Marlborough Police Chief Graham Frank catch an injured hawk. After seeing her in action, he asked her to consider taking over as animal control officer, a position he had filled on a temporary basis since last year. When the selectmen approached her with a formal offer in July, Cassie eagerly accepted. For now, her responsibilities are taking much more time than she anticipated, but she views this as an investment in her education as well as that of the community. By establishing her own Facebook page (“Sheffield Animal Control and Inspection”) Cassie has been able to advocate for more proactive alternatives to managing wildlife. “One side effect of the Facebook page is getting opinions I wasn’t prepared for,” she admits, “but I am getting thicker skin.”

When asked how Covid-19 has impacted her role, Cassie is quick to note that, to date, she has only served in this capacity during the pandemic. “Things were crazy in Sheffield this spring, with lots of calls complaining about dogs being off-leash. When people were resistant, I tried to use my role to remind them that the leash law wasn’t meant to punish them but to protect their dog from the aggressive dog that was going to come after it.”

Most current calls relate to getting rid of unwanted “pests” living under decks and porches or eating flower and vegetable gardens. “I think people need to change their mindset,” she suggests. “You can’t just get rid of everything that inconveniences you.” Rather than poisoning rodents with bait that could get passed along to their predators (she recently observed a peregrine falcon and white-tailed hawk whose deaths may be linked to second-generation poisons), she recommends trying alternative ways to “convince them there are better places to live.” These include using products such as Critter Ridder, Mylar strips, dryer sheets, and scented

sacs of mint or spices (cinnamon and cayenne pepper work especially well).

Cassie acknowledges that there is a lot to learn, but she is excited by this new opportunity to serve her community and gain expertise. Down the road, when restrictions are lifted on in-person meetings, she looks

forward to visiting classrooms to provide hands-on, experiential learning in the ways humans and animals interact. Her love for animals is infectious — and will help our community build an even better understanding of our wildlife neighbors. □

THE SIXTEENTH ELIHU BURRITT AWARD

Saturday, August 15, was Elihu Burritt Day in New Marlborough. Typically, we would celebrate with a town-wide fair on the Village Green. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, the Cultural Council decided to cancel the fair. We did this bearing in mind best practices to insure the health and safety of all residents.

An important part of the celebration is the presentation of the annual Elihu Burritt Award, given to a resident or residents who have given generously to our community. With the pandemic, we have all seen gracious, open-hearted efforts by so many residents to help others. We are overwhelmed by the way this community has pulled

together in the fight against Covid-19.

In recognition of these efforts by all members of the community, The New Marlborough Cultural Council has decided to present the Sixteenth Elihu Burritt Award to the Citizens and Businesses of New Marlborough. The award was presented at the Town Meeting on August 15. The award certificate will be displayed in the library.

We thank you and look forward to celebrating with all of you with our usual flair on the Village Green, Saturday August 21, 2021! □

Nancy Barbe, Chair, New Marlborough Cultural Council



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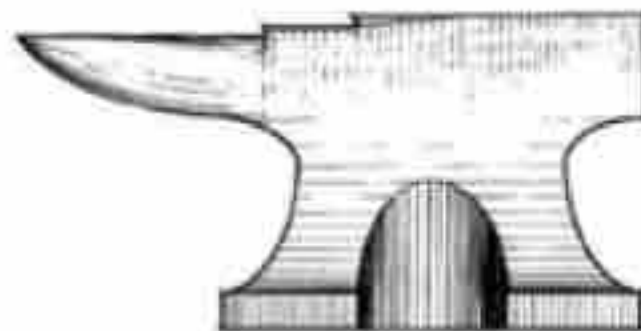


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Sixteenth Annual Elihu Burritt Award

in appreciation and gratitude for the many generous efforts to provide comfort, care, and sustenance to all during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the best of our community during this crisis.



Town Business Is Your Business BOARD OF SELECTMEN



July 27: With all three members participating by phone at a meeting convened at 5:00 p.m. — to accommodate a joint meeting with the Finance Committee at 6:00 p.m. — the selectmen returned to approval of lease agreements with the Fire Company. In effect for a number of years, the leases specify that \$1 per year be paid to house the Fire Department's trucks and equipment in the new fire house and \$500 a month for garaging the police cruiser. The Board had postponed the signing at its last meeting when Selectman Richard Long raised concerns that the leases didn't specify whether the landlord or the tenant had responsibility for the buildings or the equipment in them. He also raised questions about the vagueness of the insurance clauses and wanted to see language for coverage in the event of a default for nonpayment of rent.

However, when they came up for discussion at this afternoon's meeting, it was clear not everybody was onboard with the revisions. Chairman Tara White said that a lot of the new language was simply unnecessary. Town Administrator Mari Enoch passed along concerns over the insurance clauses of Fire Company President David Smith and wanted more time to look into them. So the signing was put off yet again for another two weeks.

Moving on, the Board addressed the issue of the crowds and police coverage at Umpachene Falls Park. Chairman Tara White, who had visited the park three times over the weekend, said there were more people on Sunday than on Saturday, but for the most part everyone was socially distancing and well behaved. "People were staying in their own groups," she said. "There wasn't any craziness that I could tell."

Police Chief Graham Frank concurred, estimating

that a total of perhaps six hundred people visited the park over the two-day weekend.

"But there were no real issues and no complaints," he said, "a couple of people drinking and stereo systems playing is all." Reporting that the parking situation was much improved from earlier weekends, Chief Frank noted that when the twenty-five car capacity of the parking area was filled, additional traffic was redirected by the police detail to park along Clayton Mill River Road, leaving passage through the narrow park road clear. That was a major concern earlier in the summer, with cars parked all along the sides of the access road, which would have made it virtually impossible for emergency vehicles to get down to the park, had it become necessary.

As Ms. Enoch pointed out, the Town paid for the two officers to be at the park from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday at a cost of \$1,440 for the weekend. However, she believes the cost can be covered by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) act, raising the question in Ms. White's mind "of how do we want to go forward." As she noted, there are potentially five more weekends of nice summer weather through Labor Day remaining, "and I'd be skeptical that things would go as smoothly if there were no police presence there."

In addition to the parking issue, she pointed out that the the park has no restrooms, and that bringing in a portable toilet would be problematic since there's no running water to clean it, which, she said, would need to be done at least once a day. After agreeing they would revisit the issue with Chief Frank at their next meeting and check with Board of Health Agent Scott McFarland as to whether there's a way to provide portable toilet

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facilities, the selectmen voted to continue a weekend police presence at the park through Labor Day.

Finally, Ms. Enoch, noting that “this is a time more than ever when an active Park Commission is needed,” urged that additional members be recruited to serve on it. The Umpachene Falls Park Commission, authorized to have up to five members, currently has just two.

In other matters, the Board acted on three more Town appointments: Marsha Harvey to the Council on Aging; Elizabeth Rosenberg to the Housing Committee; and Robert Hartt as the Town’s alternate delegate to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The Board approved the Town’s monthly budget for August, the so-called one-twelve budget the Town is required to file with the state Department of Revenue in the absence of an approved FY21 budget. The approval, Ms. White pointed out, may be moot after voters approve the FY21 budget at the Annual Town Meeting August 15.

The Board awarded a design services contract to EDM Services of Pittsfield to develop plans to bring Town Hall into compliance with the Americans for Disabilities Act, or what is also referred to as “architectural barrier removal.” (Although the other bidder, Clark and Green of Great Barrington, was also well qualified, said Mr. Long, a member of the four-person Designer Selection Committee, the vote for EDM was “unanimous.”) The contract must be finalized by August 28. It is worth \$80,000, which is being funded by a Community Development Block Grant. But as Ms. Enoch, who’s chairing the committee said, “We’re hopeful we can reach agreement on the contract well before then.”

The Board voted to accept a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Town and StarBright Farm to serve as a boarding facility for stray

domestic animals brought in by the animal control officer. StarBright is owned and operated by newly named Animal Control Officer Cassie Keeley and is located at her home on Foley Hill Road. As the MOU states, the Town is responsible to feed, care for, and shelter any unclaimed animals for up to seven days at a fee of \$25 per day, after which the animal is euthanized or released for adoption.

Under town administrator updates, Ms. Enoch said the Town received notification from Park Avenue Solar that it plans to start pile driving at its commercial solar field construction sites at 646 Mill River Southfield Road either July 20 or July 27 and 540 Mill River Southfield Road August 3 or August 10. The dates are dependent on approval of the company’s building permit applications. As Ms. Enoch reminded the Board, it was a condition of the company’s special permit that it notify abutters in advance of the pile driving dates.

She also reported the Town will be reimbursed in the amount of \$8,500 by Ford Motor Company, representing half the \$17,000 cost of a repair to the Fire Department’s brush truck engine earlier this year. She lauded Fire Company President David Smith and Fire Chief Chuck Loring for their persistence in getting Ford to share in the cost. Finally, Ms. Enoch reported that the Town had contracted with Mahaiwe Tent to provide a 120-by-62-foot tent, plus a smaller tent, tables, chairs, damage waiver, deliver drop-off charge, and tablecloths for the Annual Town Meeting to be held in the playing field behind New Marlborough Central School. The cost of \$5,063, she said, would be reimbursed by CARES money.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m. without reviewing earlier meeting minutes in order to make

After agreeing they would revisit the issue, the selectmen voted to continue a weekend police presence at Umpachene Falls Park through Labor Day.



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way for the upcoming joint budget meeting with the Finance Committee.

July 27: With a full complement of Finance Committee members joining the meeting by phone, including Chairman Steve Klein, Vice Chair Michele McAuley, Sandra Fusco-Walker, Robert Miller, Barbara Marchione, John Pshenishny, and Doug Newman, a joint meeting was called to order to try to reconcile outstanding budget differences

Before getting started, however, Mr. Klein said he would like an apology from the Board on behalf of the Finance Committee for comments attributed to Chairman White in the July issue of the *New Marlborough 5 Village News*, in which Ms. White said the Finance Committee “was not doing its job, was sticking its head in the sand, and that it had decided it was not going to work on the budget.” (See Board of Selectmen Report, page 9, in the July issue.) Mr. Klein found the comments to be “unfortunate and somewhat offensive to my colleagues,” adding that they “do not lend themselves to the kind of cooperative working environment that we would all like to have. I’m more than happy to entertain an apology, if one is offered,” he added.

But none was forthcoming. Just a long silence, until finally Finance Committee member Barbara Marchione said, “Let’s move on.” And things went downhill from there.

There were thirteen budget line items on each of which the Finance Committee was seeking deeper expense cuts than the Board seemed willing to make. In all, the difference amounted to more than \$50,000. So they spent the next two and half hours trying to find common ground.

To some extent they did. The Finance Committee agreed to accept the Board’s budget proposals for Police

Department expenses (\$30,000), Police Department salaries (\$171,159) and legal counsel (\$15,000). For their part, the selectman agreed to adopt the Finance Committee’s recommendations for the Highway Department’s propane and diesel fuel budgets (\$9,500 and \$36,400, respectively), and the Fire Department’s Fire Protection budget (\$64,000).

That was where the spirit of cooperation ended, leaving seven line items on which the two sides were not able to reach agreement, an unusually large number in comparison to recent history. Some were relatively minor: a \$416 difference between the Board and the Committee on the Rescue Squad’s clerical budget of \$7,072 and an \$807 difference on transfer station salaries of \$28,776. Some were less so: a \$5,000 gap on the \$25,000 tree work budget and \$2,500 for the Town records preservation effort, which the Finance Committee wanted to zero out completely.

Two major budget items, subjects of the longest debates of the night, also remained unresolved: the Highway Department’s roads and bridges budget and the contribution to the Stabilization Fund. The Stabilization Fund effectively serves as the Town’s savings account. The money is typically used for emergency expenditures, to smooth out unexpected tax increases. Most importantly, it’s the Town’s main source of funding for big-ticket capital items, including vehicles, major road repairs, and maintenance of town buildings. “It’s how we pay for and maintain our assets,” is how Finance Committee Vice Chair McAuley put it.

In recent years the Board and Finance Committee have agreed to raise and appropriate \$150,000 for Stabilization. However, this year in the face of pandemic-related austerity, the Board elected to halve that amount to \$75,000. At the same time, it is recommending a roads and bridges budget of \$233,000, which is

The Town Hall ADA compliance contract, worth \$80,000, is being funded by a Community Development Block Grant.



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\$30,000 above the \$203,000 the Finance Committee earmarked for roads and bridges. On the other side of the ledger, Finance recommended a contribution to the Stabilization Fund of \$112,500, or \$37,500 more than the Board of Selectmen's figure.

As Ms. McAuley explained, **the Finance Committee's basic concern is not about the relationship between roads and bridges and the Stabilization fund but to prevent the operating budget from encroaching on the ability to fund capital investments into the future.** She said she's concerned that given the tightness of the Town budget, returning to a typical funding level for Stabilization next year will be difficult. This is because the Town has so little excess levy capacity — the amount it could have levied in real estate and personal property taxes under Proposition 2½ but didn't. At one point during the discussion, Mr. Klein asked the selectmen point blank if they were going to stick with their roads and bridges number. They said they were.

Selectman Long, not surprisingly, sees it from a different perspective. In his view, capital spending is an operating expense on a different timeline, and that there's nothing wrong in making a modest cut in Stabilization next year will be difficult. And besides, he said, he'd like to see a more analytical look at the Town's expected capital needs going out, say, over the next ten years.

In the end, it is the Board's budget that is presented to the voters at Annual Town Meeting. The Finance Committee's disagreement, where it exists, is indicated in boldfaced type on the warrant **"Not Recommended by the Finance Committee."**

Peter Schuyten

August 10: Joining the three selectmen at the 6:00 p.m. tele-meeting were Town Administrator Mari Enoch, Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck, Town

Clerk Kathy Chretien, and residents Elaine Mack, Allen Isaacson, Joe Krejci, and Tom Stalker.

Ms. White thanked everyone who worked to help the town get through the August 4 windstorm, which caused the Board to declare a State of Emergency the following morning at 7:23 a.m. Although there was still a lot of clean up work to be done and some residents were still without telephone and internet, electricity had been restored to everyone in town by August 8 (a few were still without phone and internet), the Board approved a motion to remove the State of Emergency and agreed it would seek financial aid from the state or other agencies to assist with the cost of the cleanup.

Ms. Enoch relayed a report from Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring that there remains eight to ten days of tree-damage clean-up on town roads, for which the Town has contracted John Field Tree Service at a rate of \$3,600 a day. The Board, she said, would seek financial aid to help cover storm damage costs — as much as \$36,000 — but meanwhile bills may have to be paid out of the roads and bridges budget and eventually, the Reserve Fund.

The board then invited Elaine Mack of Umpachene Falls Road to express her misgivings about the influx this summer of visitors to Umpachene Falls Park. Ms. Mack, after stating that she feels privileged to live on that road, said it is a mess this year with all the tourists, who are disruptive and rude to the residents of New Marlborough. For every town resident, said Ms. Mack, she sees ten out-of-state cars, many of them driving too fast, most of them from Connecticut. **She suggested reserving at least half of the parking spaces for people who live in New Marlborough.**

Following a further recitation by Ms. Mack of the bad behavior and reckless driving habits of outsider visitors to the park, Ms. White said the Board is aware of the issue and has been working to solve individual problems.

Mr. Klein said he would like an apology from the Board on behalf of the Finance Committee — none was forthcoming.

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A police detail has been hired, at \$1,440 per weekend, to direct traffic, send people over to Clayton Mill River Road to park, and also to tour the falls to keep visitors within park boundaries. To Ms. Mack's suggestion that the Town issue stickers to townspeople wishing to use the park and ticket others, Ms. White said a new bylaw would be needed to legalize ticketing and that this could not be accomplished this year.

Mr. Long thanked Ms. Mack for presenting her concerns and asked that the Board move on to fully reconstituting the Umpachene Park Commission. Ms. Mack had expressed an interest in being on the Commission, and the Board unanimously appointed her, along with Bruce Pierce and Sarah Jackson, for a term that would begin immediately and end June 30, 2021. The three new members will join Robert Twing and Warren Weldon on the Commission. Ms. White instructed the new appointees to stop by Town Hall and be sworn in by the Town Clerk.

The Board then turned to the latest announcement from Governor Charlie Baker, reducing the number of people allowed at a public gathering to fifty and instituting a requirement in which anyone arriving from a state that is not on Massachusetts's safe state list be quarantined fourteen days or provide a negative Covid-19 test. The Board agreed to create a policy regarding the latest decree so Town employees understood their responsibilities if they decide to travel beyond the safe states listed in the decree. In response to a question from Ms. Enoch, Ms. White said the Board would need to take under consideration whether an employee needing to quarantine because of travel to a non-safe state would have to use vacation time to do so.

Ms. Fleck complained of visitors to Town Hall who do not wear masks and asked the Board to reinforce the message to residents that they must have an

appointment to visit Town Hall. Ms. White said the Town Hall entry door is locked and shouldn't be opened to someone not wearing a mask.

Next on the agenda, Town Clerk Kathy Chretien updated the Board about early voting for the September 1 primary election, which will be held from August 22 through 28. The hours for voting Monday through Friday are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Saturday, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. — with no more than two voters allowed in Town Hall at a time. Mask-

wearing is obligatory. Ms. Chretien stated she hadn't yet decided on Sunday hours, but the state is awaiting her decision and she needs the selectmen to sign the warrant so the sheriff can post it.

The Board then reviewed a letter from Dave Herrick requesting it act on the alcohol license being held by Jessica Holcomb. He said that, by law, the owner of the license needs to be in possession of

the licensed premises. Ms. White stated, that on advice of Town counsel, the issuance required a public hearing and would have to be postponed to a later meeting as the Board must first send out certified letters. Mr. Long asked if there were any continuing Board of Health or building inspector issues that could impact the reissue of the license. Ms. White stated the license can only be reissued to a property and not a person. The property owner must apply to the ABCC, following which the Board of Health will inspect the premises.

Following on a suggestion from Mr. Long that members of boards and committees be educated in the requirements of open-meeting laws and ethics rules, Tom Stalker said that training in these matters was required of all new members and refresher courses every two years. He cited several complaints of abridgment of such rules to the state attorney general's office, however, he did not clarify whether all of these were filed by him

Two major budget items remained unresolved: the Highway Department's roads and bridges budget and the contribution to the Stabilization Fund.

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or if there were other complainants in town.

The Board reviewed and approved changes to the leases of space in the fire houses in Southfield (see the July 27 report above) and voted approval of the leases themselves. Next it reviewed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) New Marlborough has with Great Barrington for the use of its lockup and testing equipment for FY21. Ms. Enoch stated this is an ongoing agreement that this year will cost \$150 per prisoner per day — the costs of transport, food, and cell monitoring are not included. Police Chief Graham Frank used the facility three or four times last year. The Board approved the MOU and asked Ms. Enoch to execute it.

Mr. Long said that bids for culvert work on Route 57 would be open later that week and that work would start immediately thereafter. Following a discussion of preparedness for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting — it would be Mr. Carson’s first as selectmen — the meeting was adjourned. □

Sandra Fusco-Walker

August 20: By virtue of its flexible summer schedule, the Board convened a Thursday afternoon meeting at 5:00 p.m., where the first order of business was to review and approve the FY21 employee wage and compensation package approved at the recent Annual Town Meeting. All three members participated by phone.

As was reported previously, the Town, through its Human Resources Committee (HRC), has spent the past year working with an outside consultant to develop a uniform and more competitive salary structure as part of an effort to put the Town’s personnel policies on a more professional and business-like footing. In addition to a basic annual cost of living adjustment of 1.6 percent, the new compensation package includes additional amounts for cases in which the resulting salary falls below that of employees in comparable jobs in surrounding towns

A liquor license can only be reissued to a property and not a person. The property owner must apply to the ABCC, following which the Board of Health will inspect the premises.

— the result of an HR study that looked at positions, responsibilities and salaries of employees in nearly a dozen other similar-sized towns. The near-term goal was to boost employee wages to the low end of the wage range paid in those towns, with the understanding the salaries would be raised further later on.

In addition to making the weekly pay rates more competitive, HRC, chaired by Selectman Richard Long, recommended establishing an expected number of weekly hours by position, which an employee may not exceed without supervisory approval. In cases where an employee is required to exceed the number of expected hours, he or she would then work a reduced number of hours the following week. Thus a major impact of the “expected hours” policy would be to virtually eliminate the large amounts of compensatory time that is currently being taken.

The new work rules apply primarily to nonexempt employees, that is hourly workers who have little or no management roles or responsibilities and, more importantly, who make less than \$684 per week, according to the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. And to keep track of those hours, Mr. Long, who was the driving force behind the HR initiative, is also calling for the introduction of a time sheet. “I think we need to have a consistent time sheet, so we can track whether people are putting in excess hours, especially exempt employees, while the non-exempts need to put in a time sheet because they are paid for every hour worked, excluding lunch.”

“There may be instances when the average weekly expectation has to be exceeded,” Mr. Long explained, so a small contingency amount of \$1,500 was built into the budget just for those cases. “Nevertheless, we expect over the course of a quarter [of a year] that the average for all weekly hours would work out to the approximate expected amount.” However, just to be



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sure, he recommends the weekly hours be reviewed no less than quarterly “to insure that excess time is not being worked.”

As for exempt employees, of which there are only a handful in the Town of New Marlborough, including the Town Administrator, Highway Superintendent, Police Chief, and Library Director, he said a comp time policy could still apply, since they’re not paid by the hour. So when they end up working a substantial number of extra hours on a consistent basis for a number of weeks, they could request comp time and “that would be a discretionary decision by the Board, but certainly one that could be granted because it would not violate the law.”

There was considerable pushback from Chairman White, who in addition to being a selectman is also the Town accountant and therefore a nonexempt employee working out of Town Hall. For one thing, she strongly objected to the Town’s new treasurer receiving the full benefit of the compensation package while he is still on probation. “The treasurer is on probation, just hired in mid-June, and you’re going to increase the treasurer position above the 1.6 percent? I have a bit of an issue with that,” she said. “I don’t have a problem with the 1.6, but to increase the implementation addition, which is quite substantial for that position, I do have a problem with that until the person comes off probation.”

She also raised objection to the meager salary addition for everyone else. She said the way it’s working out “very few people are getting any implementation additions at all, and one person’s getting 23 cents. It’s almost a slap in the face,” she said. “And if we think that what we did this year is bringing us back up, we’re wrong, because we’re still the bottom of the bottom, while most other towns gave a 2 percent raise. And I’m already hearing feedback.”

But Mr. Long stood his ground. On the treasurer’s increase he said it was not based on the individual who happens to be in the position; it’s based solely on the position. He also noted there was no discussion at the time of the treasurer’s hire that he would be coming in at a probationary rate. “We can establish a new policy that the newly hires would come in at a probationary rate, but we’d need to figure out how that would work.”

Speaking more broadly, he went on to say that as a policy matter he wants to see a more competitive pay range for employees, at say the twenty-fifth or thirtieth percentile instead of at the fifth, but as he noted that would have created budget problems in what is already a difficult budget year. “What’s important is that we’ve

corrected an internal inequity,” he said, “but we still need to make our pay more competitive with surrounding towns. Yes, we have further to go, but we have to find a way to increase budgets to do that in the future.”

After they had all had their say, the Board – including Ms. White, whose compensation is directly impacted – voted unanimously to award the overall increase to the employees and made it retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1. In so doing, they also approved the expected weekly hours policy.

In other matters, the Board voted to award a highway materials contract for various grades and sizes of crushed stone, processed gravel, rip rap, bank run gravel, top soil, fill, and delivered dry screened road sand to Segalla Sand and Gravel of Canaan. It awarded a separate contract to Laurelbrook Natural Resources, also of Canaan, for picked-up dry screened road sand, and a third

contract for various sizes of crushed stone to John S. Lane of Westfield, Massachusetts. As these were joint bids with Sheffield, the awards are subject to approval by the Sheffield Board.

For road repair and maintenance work, the Board awarded a fog-sealing contract for County Road to Sealcoating, Inc. of Braintree, Massachusetts, in the amount of \$21,646, or \$1.48 per square yard. Sealcoating, which was the only bidder, said it expected to begin work next week. The Board also awarded a contract for resurfacing Hadsell Street to LB Corporation of Lee for \$110,452. LB was the lowest of five bidders and said it plans to complete the work this year.

After approving the minutes of five previous meetings, and postponing consideration of nine others, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m. □

Peter Schuyten

The treasurer’s increase was based solely on the position, not the individual.



Southfield
Lawn Service

Bill Ruane
Billruane303@gmail.com
413-446-4656

VIEW FROM THE BOARD

The weather could not have been more cooperative for the Annual Town Meeting, held on August 15, and it was good to see members of our community come out and take part in our legislative process.

This event, months in the planning, could not have taken place without Moderator Barry Shapiro guiding the process. Barry took the helm and made sure that changes happening at the state level were incorporated into making the meeting as safe as possible for our residents. Thank you to Barry for his tireless efforts, to the staff at Town Hall, to everyone who helped with setting up chairs and tables, with parking, and guiding everyone to their seats, and to our First Responders who were there, just in case. I cannot think of a way we could have held this meeting in a safer manner for our residents. And lastly, thank you to all who attended.

Storm Isaias swept through our town in early August and left a tremendous amount of damage. Very few roads remained passable, with trees and phone and electric lines down. Outages made it difficult to get information to everyone. While some parts of town, received power and phone service early on, some waited days. Although the Town declared a State of Emergency, the state threshold for receiving disaster funding for clearing

the roadways and making repairs was not met. But the process has gone smoothly. For that, we owe thanks to our Emergency Management Director, Monica Zinke, for pulling things together and staying in touch with the utility companies, and to the Highway Department, Fire Department, Rescue personnel, and so many others for all of the work that happened in the ensuing days. Our Highway Department continues to clear debris, so please be patient as they work their way through our ninety miles of roadway.

I am not sure how many of you subscribe to the Reverse 911 for emergency messages. Reverse 911, primarily used for emergency situations, can also be used to notify residents of closed roadways or other important Town information (such as the Annual Town Meeting). You can sign up to receive these notifications on your landline phone or cell phone. Please call the Town Hall at 229-8116 for information on how to subscribe to reverse 911.

Finally, if you have questions, suggestions or comments that you would like answered or wish to know more about, please give us a call. This is your town, and the Board of Selectmen and other Town employees are here to help you. □

Tara White

THE PLANNING BOARD

The August 12 meeting via telephone of the Planning Board was primarily devoted to preparing a strategy for the presentation of the marijuana bylaw at the Annual Town Meeting three days hence. Chairman Mark Carson, along with members Bob Hartt and Paul Marcel debated the pros and cons of acceding to a last-minute request from a citizen to change the wording on the Schedule of Dimensional Requirements. It presently states that the growing area in a residential district be limited to 10,000 square feet indoors “and/or” 20,000 square feet outdoors. The petition requested that “and/or” be changed to “or.”

After batting the question around for twenty minutes or more, all three members came to the conclusion that the language was correct as written. Bob Hartt put it succinctly, saying, “This was the intention. It’s not a mistake.” He further offered the opinion that the Board should resist any attempts that might be made on the floor of the Annual Town Meeting to alter the bylaw.

The Board members then sorted out who would be presenting the marijuana bylaw and the somewhat related bylaw that would create the possibility for the Special Permitting Board to hire consultants for technical review of applications at the applicant’s expense. Bob Hartt felt strongly that former Chairman Daniel Doern should

take the lead in that presentation, since the evolution of the bylaw “was really his baby.” Mark Carson said he would contact Mr. Doern with the request that he be the Planning Board’s spokesman.

In other business, Chairman Carson mentioned the need for Board members to study up on conflict of interest issues and open meeting laws. He went on to say that one person has expressed interest in joining the Board, to be further considered at the next meeting on August 26. Also, he said that he is still working on finding a secretary to record the minutes of each meeting, a job currently being handled by Bob Hartt. He then mentioned that a citizens’ petition on the Annual Town Meeting warrant will be something for the Planning Board to review at some point in the future. Lastly, Mr. Carson said that, with Umpachene Park being “overrun by outsiders,” he had been approached about having the Planning Board write a bylaw that would give Town police the power to write parking tickets. He wasn’t at all sure that the Planning Board had that authority, though.

Upon the suggestion by Paul Marcel that a “point of diminishing returns” had been arrived at, the meeting was adjourned. □

Larry Burke

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

Outdoors, Socially Distanced, and Briskly Conducted

Under the shady maple trees at the rear of the Meeting House, twenty-nine members of the New Marlborough Village Association convened on Sunday morning, August 9, to hold a socially-distanced version of its annual meeting. Association President Ben Harms, after a brief introduction, turned the podium (actually the ramp to the back entry) over to Barry Shapiro, who, in his capacity as treasurer, delivered a largely positive report on the organization's fiscal health. Mr. Shapiro said that the NMVA's bank balance is \$307,770, on top of which can be added another \$135,000 – a bequest from the late Peggy Phillips – in the near future. He further reported that, in round figures, income in FY19 was \$57,000, while expenses amounted to \$68,000, a net loss of \$11,000. The performances staged by the Music & More program brought in \$14,000 and donations amounted to \$24,000.

Looking at the financial picture for 2020, Mr. Shapiro predicted an understandably smaller income, given no ticket sales from the cancelled season. He figures that, with upkeep of the Meeting House and other fixed expenses, there will be a net loss of around \$20,000. On the flip side, however, there will be up to \$22,000 available from the organization's fund at the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, not to mention the Phillips bequest. So, there is enough of a cushion to get through until the 2021 season, when, hopefully, the coronavirus will be no longer an issue.

Ben Harms then reported on Music & More's activities, which amounted to two well-attended house concerts in the winter, and an upcoming virtual event at 4:30 p.m. on October 3 – a talk that Simon Winchester will host, featuring Linda Greenhouse, longtime *New York Times* opinion columnist, on matters relating to the Supreme Court. Mention was made of a failed attempt



Photo by Larry Burke


President Ben Harms directs attention to new Village Association bylaw.

to stage an outdoor sculpture show this summer on the Meeting House grounds. An impasse had arisen over liability coverage, and this subsequently led the Board of Directors to revise the Association's bylaws related to insurance coverage responsibilities for the organization, as well as for the artists who show their work.

Additional changes to the bylaws were outlined by Will Regan, including a switch in the conducting of Board meetings to closed-door meetings. President Harms then described the Meeting House as being in very good shape and said that the Board and members continue to struggle with finding ways to increase the uses of the building.

Turning to the final item on the agenda, Board membership, Mr. Harms thanked Lee Backer for his years of service as he retires from the Board, and welcomed the addition of five new members – Ellen Sweet and Anna Houston who joined last fall, and brand new members Paula Hatch, Marian Rosenfeld, and Joe Poindexter. The meeting concluded at 10:45 a.m., a crisp three-quarters of an hour in duration. □

Larry Burke



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‘DON’T MESS WITH THE USPS’

Not all the signboards were so artfully rhymed, but the message was clear: the U. S. Post Office is an essential element of democracy — never more-so than as the nation enters a presidential election in the midst of a pandemic. This and those of dozens of other placard holders were gathered just outside the Southfield Post Office at 11:00 a.m.



Townpeople gathered across from the Southfield Post Office to express their displeasure with the defunding of the Postal Service.

photo by Joe Poindexter

August 22 to protest the defunding of the Postal Service, the removal of post boxes and sorting equipment, and the reduction of overtime under the direction of recently appointed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy.

The Saturday event, according to organizer Judy Friedlander, was one of 700 nationwide, all held at the insti-

Post Office Fire DeJoy.”

The gathering was long on neighborliness, short on rhetoric, but before it dispersed, Ms. Friedlander invited protesters to pick up a support-the-Post-Office postcard and mail it to their senator — and hope it gets there. □

Joe Poindexter

gation of MoveOn.org at the same hour, local time. The political protest may have been a first for New Marlborough, as one of those in attendance observed, but it didn’t lack in verbal panache. “Mail Equals Democracy,” said one sign. “Vote Free Vote Proud Vote by Mail,” said another. Then there was “Trump Tears Us Apart — Our Post Office Brings Us Together” and “My Mail, My Vote” and “Save the

Volunteers Needed for Two Town Boards

Two Town boards, the **Agricultural Commission** and the **Planning Board** remain understaffed. If you would like to contribute to the effectiveness of Town government and help keep New Marlborough running smoothly, please contact the Board of Selectmen to let them know of your willingness to fill a vacancy.

Members selected for the Agricultural Commission are appointed annually and will serve until June 30, 2021. Members of the Planning Board are elected, but the Board of Selectmen can fill vacancies when they occur, as is now the case, between elections. An appointed Planning Board member would serve until Town elections in May 2021 and could then run for election if he or she wished to continue.

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ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

GOVERNANCE UNDER THE BIG TENT

By Joe Poindexter



photo by Larry Burke

The meeting tent, all 7,440 square feet of it, pitched on New Marlborough Central's ball field

It had a ringmaster. It had music. It had a couple of tugs of war (metaphorically speaking). And it all took place under a great expanse of gleaming white canvas. While it wasn't as much fun as a three-ring circus, it was, literally, a breath of fresh air. Which it had to be, given the reluctance, even here in the relatively virus-free environs of Berkshire County, to gather in large numbers indoors.

Most importantly, the 2020 Annual Town Meeting, held August 15 under a tent pitched in the ball field behind New Marlborough Central School, went off like clockwork. The sound system was impeccable, a huge tent provided welcome protection from the mid-August sun, Porta-Potties were available, traffic control was smooth, and Moderator Barry Shapiro kept things rolling along smartly. Following a playing of the National Anthem (at least one townsman was observed taking a knee in recognition of Black Lives Matter), Mr. Shapiro extolled the 400-year-old tradition of the New England town meeting — “The nearer governance is to the people, the better it shows the will of the people” — and urged brevity in remarks to the assembled — “The fewer the words, the greater the profit.”

Holly Valente, then addressing the meeting on behalf of the New Marlborough Cultural Counsel, said that cancellation of Elihu Burritt Day activities did not preclude the awarding of the Sixteenth Annual Elihu Burritt Award, this year to the citizens and businesses of New Marlborough for all they have done to help the community weather the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. An award plaque, she said, will hang in the New Marlborough Town Library.

Then it was off to the business at hand. Under the

briskly wielded gavel of Moderator Shapiro, warrant Articles 1 to 9, described as housekeeping measures, were passed unanimously as a group. So, too, was Article 10, which specified the annual salaries of Town officers, ranging from library trustee (\$100) to selectman (\$2,850) to town clerk (\$37,676). Similarly Article 11, covering general governance expenses from minutiae (moderator: \$145) to substantial (Town Hall expenses: \$39,500), also passed without dissent.

With Article 12, appropriations for highways and public works, the meeting entered choppy waters. The sticking point was the request to approve \$233,000 for roads and bridges expenses. While this amount was \$20,000 less than the Highway Department had requested, it was \$30,000 more than was recommended by the Finance Committee. Committee members Michele McAuley, Sandra Fusco-Walker, and Chairman Steve Klein explained that they were protecting future capital needs by reducing current operating expenses where it seemed prudent to do so. (See Board of Selectmen report, page 6, for a fuller discussion of their position.)

Finance Committee member Barbara Marchione took the microphone to voice the dissent of three of the seven-member Committee to its recommendation. She was followed by Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring, who pointed out that the town's thirty-eight miles of dirt roads required increasing maintenance with the more frequent warming and freezing of recent winters. This means putting down a foot of gravel, where in the past a few inches, “a bandaid” Mr. Loring called it, would have been used. He cited the tree fall from the recent wind storm as another sector of departmental expense that would need to be covered.

After a Finance Committee-initiated amendment calling for roads and bridges expenses of \$203,000 was defeated, Article 12 as a whole — a total of \$1,054,539 and \$57,626 more than was budgeted last year — passed.

Articles 13, the school district operating and transportation budget, plus the District's capital bond, passed without debate. The operating budget, which had already been approved in the other four towns of the district, is \$2,841,216, or about 5 percent more than last year. Payment on the capital bond has declined, however, so that the increase in the overall school ap-

propriation is closer to 3 percent. Article 14, School Committee representation, \$1,650, and 15, a culture and recreation category comprised mostly of library expenses, \$47,827, and salaries, \$64,936, also was approved without comment.

Then came Article 16, which called for \$406,775 of funding for "protection of persons and property," about half of it earmarked for the Police Department.

The moderator recognized requests to vote separately on line item 1, \$171,159 for Police Department salaries, and 11, the building inspector salary of \$24,877, and the remainder of the twenty-four lines were approved. A motion was made to increase the Police Department salary by \$14,000, and Police Chief Graham Frank rose to defend the increase. The Department has recently sustained two resignations, and he is now "extremely understaffed," said Mr. Frank. New officers will need training and more competitive salaries, he added.

In response, Ms. McAuley noted that the Finance Committee in addressing operating expenses favored remaining within the limits established by a recent hu-

man resources study of Town employee salaries. A number of others came to the defense of the appropriation. "Salaries need to keep pace with the times," said Chuck Loring. "We need the police coverage," said Marilyn Fracasso. A motion to increase the line item from \$171,159 to \$185,159 was approved by a vote of 53 to 31. After Town Administrator Mari Enoch explained that the building inspector's salary was raised by \$3,345 to accommodate an increase in time demands on the part-time building inspector, who is filling in while the full-time inspector is on medical leave of absence, that line in the article also passed.

The next five articles provided clear sailing: Articles 17 and 18, bookkeeping transfers of \$30,470 and \$34,140 within New Marlborough Rescue; Article 19, \$138,150 for "health and human services," \$85,000 of which goes to run the Transfer Station; Article 20, debt and interest payments of \$112,400 for fire and highway equipment; and Ar-

article 21, a grab-bag of miscellaneous expenses, including retirement and health fund payments of \$163,865 and \$213,212 respectively, totaling \$535,966.

With Article 22, the philosophical divide between the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen opened once more. The question: how much money to send to the Stabilization Fund. To alleviate the amounts they had awarded in operating expenses, the selectmen elected to slash the appropriation of \$150,000 in normal years in half. The Finance Committee, with an eye to what are almost certain to be significant capital needs in the coming years, recommended a less draconian cut to \$112,500. In the ensuing debate of long-term versus



Mark Carson makes a point from the selectmen's table.

photo by Larry Burke

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short-term need, short-term won out and the Stabilization Fund appropriation of \$75,000 was approved.

Articles 23 and 24, transferring \$198,000 for road repair and \$475,000 for the purchase of a highway roller, were approved. Tom Stalker challenged the \$51,000 for the purchase of a new police cruiser in Article 25, citing the two vehicles already owned by the Department. Chief Frank said the older of the two was ready for retirement and would be donated to the Cemetery Commission. The newer vehicle, he said, has 103,000 miles on it and would be moved to back-up status with the arrival of a new cruiser. The measure passed.

Transfers from Free Cash, in amounts ranging from \$3,340 for a Highway Department yard security camera to \$8,200 for a radio repeater, were approved in Articles 26 to 29. As was Article 30, which fixed the maximum amounts to be paid to the plumbing, gas, and



Moderator Barry Shapiro recognizes a voter. photo by Larry Burke

electrical inspectors, the Board of Health, and in tax title fees.

The meeting then tackled a thorny citizens' petition, initiated by Lucinda Shmulsky, to amend the bylaws so that in addition to approval of the selectmen, approval of two-thirds of the abutters would be required to obtain a permit for certain allowed businesses in town. These include greenhouses, galleries, sawmills, antique

shops, and restaurants — and by dint of a bylaw passed in 2019, medical marijuana and marijuana research facilities. Ms. Shmulsky then moved to amend her motion so that approval of both the Board of Selectmen and at least two-thirds of the voters at a town meeting would be required for any new uses added to the bylaws. Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard, however, rose to express his opinion that the bylaw proposed by Ms. Shmulsky was illegal.

A vigorous debate followed, with some residents arguing for a say in what sort of commerce might spring up near their property, others championing the value of commerce. "Do you want the town to grow," Tom Jones asked rhetorically, "or keep it just the way it is?" Dan Doern, until recently chairman of the Planning Board, defended the thorough deliberation that led to the current permitting process. At last, a voter took the floor to propose a motion that the article needed to be further explored and should be tabled. That motion carried.

The voters then endorsed Article 32, which, among other restrictions, limited the size of medical marijuana and marijuana research facilities in rural/residential districts to a building size of 10,000 square feet and an outdoor cultivation area to 20,000 square feet. The limit for indoor village facilities is 2,500 square feet, and there can be no more than one of each kind of facility town-wide. And finally, voters adopted Article 33, which lets a permitting authority hire consultants, at the applicant's expense, to assist in understanding the more arcane elements of the application.

With that, and with a bit of Saturday morning offered back to the citizens of New Marlborough, there was an enthusiastic motion, second, and unanimous vote to adjourn. □





Moving concrete slabs into place...



And preparing for surfacing in mid-August

photo by Larry Burke

It used to be little more than sturdy planking. Not sturdy enough, said the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, which closed the Umpachene Falls Road bridge in the 2012. Contractors began prep work for a replacement bridge last fall, but the reopening of the crossing over the Umpachene, just yards upriver from Umpachene Falls Park, is still a year away. The official completion date: October 22, 2021.

Thank You to Our Contributors:

Walter Agar; Rose & Brian Dugan; and Eugene & Elizabeth Rosenberg

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NEW MARLBOROUGH ARTISTS THE NEXT GENERATION

New Marlborough, culturally dimmed by the coronavirus this summer, was briefly brightened by a mid-August afternoon of sculpture created by the youth of New Marlborough. On the initiative of Village Association Vice President Judy Friedlander and with the assistance of New Marlborough Town Librarian Deb O'Brien and Gallery Committee Chair Abbe Steinglass, sculptures were joyfully assembled in front of the Meeting House on August 15, in a space that, except for the coronavirus, would have been teeming with Elihu Burritt Day activities.

The work ranged from a surprisingly sophisticated

tower, illuminated from within, by 5-year-old Greta Downing, to the zany constructions of Peter Fields 10, using materials dredged from the Konkapot River, to the large, light-hearted mobile of Emeline Hobart, 13. They and the other artists in the show — Avery, 9, and Elijah, 10, Barber; Mirabelle Meyers, 12, and her twin brothers, Isaac and Quinn, 9; and Jacqueline Lucine Schmeizl, 14, give notice that our town abounds with creative energy. The show itself seems a good bet to become a fixture in the rich artistic environment of New Marlborough. □

Joe Poindexter

photo by Debbie O'Brien



Greta Downing and Beach Magic



Avery and Elijah Barber, with their King Pine Cone



Peter Fields alongside River Flowers



Emeline Hobart and Bigger Than Myself



photos by Joe Poindexter

Mirabelle, Isaac, and Quinn Meyers, with their creations, Order, Snoopy's Balloon, and Little Man Big Stairs



LAND TRUST NEWS

News from the trails during the pandemic:

Dogs are loving their owners' daily adventures outdoors and especially their walks on the trails at the New Marlboro Preserve and the Goodnow Preserve. And we are loving that dogs can be themselves on the trails. However, it has come to our attention that, due to the increased activity at both properties, we need to manage the canine activity so that all visitors — even those who don't recognize how adorable your dog is — feel safe and welcome. To that end, please take heed of the leash rules spelled out on new signage at the two preserves:

Goodnow Preserve

Sunrise - Noon: Dogs can be off-leash
 Noon - Sunset: Please keep dogs on leash

New Marlboro Preserve

Sunrise - Noon: Please keep dogs on leash
 Noon - Sunset: Dogs can be off-leash

We have intentionally posted that the two preserves observe opposite leash restrictions so that there is always a space available to bring your dog on or off leash. We hope that these rules help all visitors to our properties enjoy their time outdoors.

In other news, just as volunteers completed establishing the new 2.5 mile loop at the Goodnow Preserve, storm Isaias landed and wreaked havoc on our handiwork. We are catching up and cleaning up the tremendous amount of debris and tree blowdowns. Once again our volunteers have stepped right up. Our volunteers are exceptional, and our gratitude for their support and time is beyond words.

Together we are continuing to build safe and adventurous opportunities to take a break and breathe the fresh air. It is true that with every visit outdoors there is the chance to stumble on the unexpected — a bright orange contorted twist of a mushroom, the purple heart of a cedar tree just cut, the surprise of a barn owl hoot. Outdoors the world is always new!

Hope you find peace and renewal out there on the trails.




Martha Bryan



Photos by Martha Bryan and Ian Devine

Dogs loving their breaks at the Goodnow Preserve



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NEIGHBORS



Members of the **Southfield Church** first tried to deal with Covid restrictions by experimenting with outdoor worship as the weather warmed. **Robert Olsen** describes their search for a solution: “We tried it for a few weeks. Then someone later developed a fever, but no other symptoms. Mercifully, the member tested negative. But that was scare enough for most of us, so we’ve resumed “teleconference church” on the phone. Some members don’t have internet and those of us who do have too slow a connection for Zoom. I have access to a teleconference service, so that’s how we meet. I use the church phone and, with a long wire, pull it over from the hall to the sanctuary. I’m the only one there; everyone else is on the phone. I had been conducting the service from the conference room at work and used a recorded church bell to call us to worship. After our aborted outside services, I had the idea of bringing the phone over to the sanctuary and ringing our own bell. Our members appreciate hearing it, as do the neighbors in Southfield. It’s all weird, but we’re safe with no question or risk. And we march forward.”



Ronnie Leonard

Ronnie Leonard, of Hartsville, passed away on July 29 at age eighty-four. Ronnie and his wife of sixty-one years, **Ida**, started the Hartsville business, Mount Everett Landscaping and Construction. Working with his late son, **Randy**, the business expanded through the years, and became today’s Mount Everett Sanitation and excavation. After Randy’s unexpected passing in 2011, the family tradition continued, with grandsons **Travis** and **Corey** taking over the business with Ronnie’s guidance.

Ronnie had a wide range of interests, including hunting, fishing, gardening, and collecting vintage toys. He was a member of the Berkshire County Antique Car Club and attended many vintage car shows.

Most important, he was known as the quintessential good neighbor. **David Lowman** of Southfield noted that when he and his wife moved here in 1980 to take over the Southfield Store, Ronnie was among the very first local residents to welcome the newcomers, giving the lie to “New England reticence.” Years later, Ronnie purchased from David a valuable baseball signed by Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, a gift for one of his grandsons.

Mark Carson, also of Hartsville, attests to Ronnie’s neighborliness: “Ronnie Leonard was the type of guy who liked helping others, especially young children, teaching them how to repair or paint any kind of machine. He was a very talented guy. He loved horseback riding with his wife, and snowmobiling with his son, Randy. He enjoyed antique cars and going to car shows. He was the type of person I could count on as a good neighbor and friend.”

Linda Skipper, his across-the-road neighbor, gives more examples: “Ronnie was the perfect New England neighbor. In our more than thirty years across Hatchery Road from each other he was always the source of a good workable answer to any physical problem. Want to know how something works or could be improved? Just ask Ronnie. He was extremely generous with his time and was always so kind to us as neighbors and as his customers.

“I can’t count the times I have heard a plowing noise in the middle of a snowy winter night and come down the stairs to see Ronnie working hard to clear the area in front of our house before the snow could get too high. It felt like we were probably the first to be plowed since we are right across the street from his machine yard. Who could be luckier?”

“I’ve always considered him the Mayor of Hartsville. We will miss him and remember him with love and gratitude.”

Ben Webster has both personal and professional memories of Ronnie: “When Cornelia and I and the girls moved into Berkshire County and found a rental in Southfield that became our home for nineteen years, I began looking for work in excavation. Having inquired whom to talk to, I sought out Bud Hewins, Ray Tryon, and Ronnie Leonard. Ray was the one to hire me; however, it was the beginning of a long acquaintance and friendship with Ronnie. After a few years, when Cornelia and I were starting our own business, Ronnie was always a source of encouragement, advice, to loan a tool, and sometimes a piece of equipment, or just to visit. Or to talk about business and equipment. Eventually we bought our property in Hartsville, right around the corner from Ronnie. He knew the property well and described how he enjoyed deer hunting back in there, and had himself thought about what he could do with the land. I offered that he could continue to hunt the property, but I’m not sure if he ever did. He was near the end of his hunting days at that time.

“Over the years we worked on several projects with Ronnie and Randy. It was great to collaborate with their professional team, and there was never a sense of competition. It is heartening to see his grandsons carrying on in their own right, with what their father and grandfather have built.” □

compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

Ed Harvey wrote in to say, "I went paddling on Thousand Acre Swamp toward the end of July and came across this photogenic **great blue heron**." Photogenic indeed! Meanwhile, from Mill River Great Barrington Road, **Nicole Campanale** reported, "Over at our place we have a great blue heron that's been wandering around the fields for a few days. I saw it trying to catch **frogs** in the pond a week or two ago, but it seems to have moved on to hunting **mice and voles**." That seems like the kind of heron you would want to keep around.



photo by Ed Harvey

Great blue heron amidst lily pads

Ed Harvey had a great month with his camera. He sent along a beautiful shot of a female **ruby-throated hummingbird**, as well as two photos of an unusually large gathering of **common mergansers** near his home along the Konkapot in Clayton. He says, "The merganser ducks have been sighted occasionally on the Konkapot River since spring, and had a bit of congregation the other evening where, give or take, twenty-one birds showed up." He went on to say, "The same evening as the ducks' gathering, this egret [a **great egret**] made an appearance along the riverbank."



photo by Ed Harvey

Common mergansers squeeze onto a log along the Konkapot

Beth Reynolds, who also lives next to the Konkapot in Clayton, sent a series of shots of a great egret, including the one shown here of the bird in flight. Perhaps it is the same one Ed spotted? In any case, what a treat to encounter such an elegant fowl!

Lastly, sticking to the water-bird theme, **Larry Burke** had been noticing a pair of very small, almost tame, ducks in his weedy farm pond through most of June and into late July. By early August, there was just one, and then, by mid-August, that one, too, had disappeared. Perhaps these juvenile ducks had simply flown off to find others of their kind, or, given the presence of a large **snapping turtle** in the pond, they might have had a different fate. At any rate, they were an unfamiliar species to Larry, so, upon close inspection of his *Sibley Guide to Birds* and several internet sites, he feels pretty certain that these were **garganeys**, a type of blue-winged duck that is more common in Europe, but, according to the Audubon website, "this small duck sometimes goes off course, and might turn up almost anywhere in North America." □

Compiled by Larry Burke.

Send your wildlife sightings and stories to lburke2@me.com

photo by Ed Harvey



A female ruby-throated hummingbird

photo by Ed Harvey



A great egret wading in the Konkapot

photo by Beth Reynolds



A great egret takes flight

photo by Larry Burke



A juvenile garganey (most likely)



photo by Ed Harvey

A flotilla of mergansers

We present here the second of two articles written by Jon Swan, a founder of the 5 Village News, on the Stockbridge Indians, the original settlers in what is now New Marlborough. This one, concerning a descendant of the tribe, was first published in December 2010.

THE PULL OF THE HOMELAND

A Mohican Returns to a Sacred Burying Ground

by Jon Swan

On August 15, Debbie O'Brien called from the library to say that a Stockbridge Indian had come in to ask for directions to an Indian burial ground. I said I would come by and show him. That seemed a lot easier than trying to describe a route over the phone. So I drove to the library, where Debbie introduced me to Bruce Miller, who told me that he was a descendant of John Konkapot, the Stockbridge Indian chief who had sold land to white settlers in the 1720s. He also explained how he had come to learn about the existence of such mounds in our town.

He was a house painter currently working in Connecticut, he told me. Like other Stockbridge Indians, he regarded the Berkshires as his homeland and returned to it as often as he could. He had just crossed the state line when he saw a sign that read Konkapot Agriforest. He drove back down the road until he saw a girl standing in the driveway of a nearby house. He asked her if she knew what the connection was to his forebear, John Konkapot. The girl didn't know; but her grandmother did. She told Bruce that the river that runs alongside the road was called the Konkapot, and that there was an Indian burial mound just up the road. (The girl was Hannah Bushnell; her grandmother, Joan Hayden). Bruce thanked the girl and her grandmother and drove on, but he missed the mound.

The mound he had been directed to rises above the sharp bend in Clayton Mill River Road, a couple of miles north of Clayton center. It is one of three mounds in our township that for years have been regarded as Indian burial mounds. Construction of a building on the Clayton mound was reportedly halted when bones were dug up in the process. The other two mounds are the twin hills at the far end of the old New Marlborough village cemetery. These



Bruce Miller, a descendant of Stockbridge Indian Chief John Konkapot



Bruce Miller's grandmother Irene Odeal Gardner Vele. Born in 1901 at the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation in Wisconsin, she died in 1966.

Photo courtesy of the Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library/Museum, Munsee Community, Bowler, Wisconsin

stand out as impressive features in the landscape. (Editor's note: The origin of the mounds in New Marlborough Village Cemetery has been a subject of debate for many of the years since this article first appeared.)

I drove Bruce to the cemetery and parked, and we got out and walked between the mounds. Bruce took it all in. He said that in such places he could sense the spirit his ancestors had drawn strength from. He wanted to reconnect with that spirit. He hoped one day to be able to buy two acres of land in the area and live in a small house or cabin and create a sweat lodge, a place for mediation and purification rites.

Our next stop was our town park, where the Umpachene River slips over a hundred feet of rock ledges to join the Konkapot. This was said to be the favorite fishing place of John Konkapot's fellow sachem, Aaron Umpachene, later his fellow selectman on Stockbridge's first Board of Selectmen. As we walked up to the falls and along the river bank, Bruce talked about his desire to learn more about the past of his people in this place. He had gone to Yale University's Beineke Library in New Haven to read the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, who served as missionary to the Stockbridge Indians from 1751 to 1758. Like many other Stockbridge Indians, he had also stopped by the Stockbridge home of historian Lion Miles, who has been putting together a dictionary of the Mohican language and who gave Bruce a copy of his now nearly complete work-

in-progress. (Miles's *A Life of John Konkapot* was published in 2008 by the New Marlborough Historical Society.)

Bruce also mentioned that his grandmother, Irene Odeal Gardner Vele, was a direct descendant of John Konkapot, and that back in the 1960s, when Bruce was a boy, a Dutch researcher had visited the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation in Wisconsin, where the tribe, after

being pushed westward, finally settled in 1856.

Curious to know who the Dutch researcher might have been, I wrote Lion Miles; Sherry White, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community's historic preservation officer; and Pieter Hovens, curator of the North American department of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, in the Netherlands. All three sources replied that the researcher must have been Ted J. Brassler, who served as curator of the Leiden Ethnology Museum until 1970, when he moved to Canada to become a curator at the National Museum of Man, in Ottawa. According to Lion Miles, Brassler's monograph, *Riding on the Frontier's Crest: American Indian Culture and Culture Change*, published in 1974, was the first scholarly history of the Stockbridge Indians.

I shared this information with Bruce and asked him

if he had any objection to my writing an article about his visit to New Marlborough. He replied "My feeling about you writing a story of my search is that it would be positive and uplifting. It has always been my intent in my life to let people know that the Mohicans are alive. And also we are proud to learn of our past, no matter where it takes us. Some are content to study from our own library source, yet some care to go to the old lands and seek out a spiritual feeling from earth on which our ancestors stood. To be able to pray where others of our nation sought out some form of spiritual bliss helps to bring about a completeness. So I say it is okay for you write what you feel. And I thank you for your interest in the Mohican people." □

IS YOUR DOG LICENSED?

Because Town Hall has been closed for the past months, many folks have not, as yet, purchased their dog licenses. Dog licenses were due by June 29; however, with Covid-19 this time has been extended. Kathy Chretien, the town clerk, has dog licenses now. If a current rabies certificate is on file with her, dog owners may apply by mail — or via the lock-box outside the downstairs entry to Town Hall. Your application should include the owner's name, their residential and mailing address, their phone numbers, and the name or names of the dogs, their color, their breed, and their age. The charge for neutered dog is \$7 and for intact dogs, \$15. The license will be returned by mail.

Folks who have two homes and bring their dog (or dogs) from another city where they are licensed need



to carry their rabies certificate with them. They are also asked to register their dog (or dogs) with the town clerk, providing the appropriate information and a copy of their rabies certificate. There will be no charge for this, but it allows the Town to help should the dog, for instance, get lost or become injured.

Please observe New Marlborough's leash law (Section 17 Number 1 in its bylaws), which states that dogs need to be on a leash or supervised by their owners unless on their owners' property.

Should you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to call Animal Inspector Prudence Spaulding (413-229-8407) or Animal Control Officer Cassie Keeley (413-429-7603). □

Prudence Spaulding

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THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- July 1 9:43 a.m. Telephone lines down near the Highway Department garage.
- July 3 3:59 p.m. A New Marlborough village resident reports she has been victimized by a scam.
- July 4 11:40 a.m. Officer assists in a bicycle accident on South Sandisfield Road.
- 11:43 a.m. Tree down on Rhoades and Bailey Road.
- 2:45 p.m. The animal control office is called after a Canaan Southfield Road resident reports that a large dog with no identification has visited her porch.
- 3:38 p.m. A resident reports that her dog was struck by a vehicle on South Sandisfield Road.
- 9:34 p.m. A County Road resident complains of nearby fireworks.
- 9:44 P.M. A Hartsville New Marlborough Road resident complains of nearby fireworks.
- July 7 3:07 p.m. Following a call from a neighbor, an officer helps escort three goats across Norfolk Road to their home in Southfield village.
- July 9 2:43 p.m. Following a report of money stolen from her safe, an Umpachene Falls Road caller reports that she has found the money.
- July 10 8:31 p.m. The Highway Department is notified of a tree down at the intersection of Mill River Southfield and River Roads.
- July 11 12:22 p.m. The animal control officer is alerted after a caller reports a stray dog at his Mill River Southfield Road residence.
- 7:30 p.m. A caller reports a mattress and other trash dumped at his Adsit Crosby Road property.
- July 12 12:34 p.m. National Grid notified after a caller reports a power outage at his Clayton Mill River Road property.
- 8:17 p.m. An officer observing a motorist turning into random driveways on Hatchery Road determines she is from a small town in central Texas and is lost.
- July 13 6:21 p.m. A caller reports six to seven gun shots near his Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road residence.
- July 14 3:57 p.m. A delivery person reports that she has been forcibly detained during a delivery to Red Fox Drive.
- 6:03 p.m. A caller reports a driver strewing garbage behind his truck on Hayes Hill Road.
- July 17 9:09 p.m. A Clayton resident is transported on a felony arrest to the Berkshire County House of Correction.
- July 18 3:30 p.m. A motorist reports damage to his pickup truck after hitting a telephone pole guide wire on Adsit Crosby Road.
- July 19 6:13 a.m. A caller reports two vehicles stolen the previous night from his Konkapot Road residence; at 10:26 a.m., Waterbury, Connecticut, police report they have found one of them.
- 4:46 p.m. A caller, concerned for their safety, reports kids jumping off the dam at York Lake.
- 9:15 p.m. National Grid is notified after a caller reports a power outage at his Mill River Great Barrington Road residence.
- July 20 11:06 a.m. National Grid is notified of a tree on wires on Leffingwell Road.
- July 21 11:00 a.m. An Egremont resident reports a call supposedly from the New Marlborough Police Department warning her of an impending arrest warrant and advising her to contact a certain law firm to have it quashed; she is advised that no such warrant exists and that the call is a scam.
- 11:30 a.m. A Mill River resident reports that her car alarm sounded for no apparent reason at 1:30 earlier that morning.
- 12:11 p.m. An officer assists with a disabled truck on County Road.
- 3:30 p.m. A resident complains of heavy traffic and illegal parking on Umpachene Falls Road.
- 4:00 p.m. A Southfield resident reports her suspicions of a bicyclist who stopped at her property and asked for a ride to Albany, New York.
- 6:30 p.m. A Mill River resident reports a scam call threatening legal action if she did not repay "money she owed."
- July 23 5:35 p.m. Officer assists a Downs Road resident who has locked herself out of her car.
- 6:10 p.m. Tree down and blocking Brewer Branch Road.
- July 24 10:24 a.m. The Department enlists the help of the animal control officer in removing a bat from a residence on Hayes Hill Road.
- July 25 8:30 a.m. An officer assists volunteers in picking up garbage at Umpachene Falls Park.
- 4:47 p.m. Wires down on East Hill Road.
- 10:52 p.m. Three visitors with a tent are advised that there is no camping at Campbell Falls Park.
- July 26 9:01 p.m. A caller requests assistance in ridding

her Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road residence of three bats.

9:13 p.m. Teens from Connecticut advised to desist from riding their dirt bikes in the vicinity of Brewer Hill and Clayton Mill River Roads.

9:51 p.m. A Lake Road resident reports the theft of four American flags from a nearby bridge on Hartsville Mill River Road.

July 27 3:38 p.m. A Clayton resident reports a scam caller threatening suspension of Social Security payments if she did not provide certain personal information.

July 28 9:00 a.m. Notified of damage to a Clayton Mill River Road property caused by a Maxymillian Construction transport truck on its way to Umpachene

Falls bridge, the company pledges to repair it.

11:27 a.m. A caller reports a tree on wires and blocking roadway near her Clayton Mill River Road property.

July 29 1:01 p.m. A Southfield resident reports a near collision with a driver racing through a stop sign at Southfield Branch Road.

July 30 3:52 p.m. A Mill River village resident reports receiving a phone call from a land line in his house, where no one is supposed to be present.

July 31 6:31 a.m. An Alum Hill Road resident complains of frequent visits to her property of neighboring donkeys.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

FIRE AND RESCUE

July 2 4:17 p.m. Red Fox Lane CO Alarm

July 3 12:01 a.m. Campbell Falls Road Medical Call

July 3 1:51 a.m. Alum Hill Road Fire Alarm

July 4 11:49 a.m. York Lake Medical Call

July 4 10:35 p.m. Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road Medical Call

July 10 8:41 a.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call

July 11 3:59 a.m. Mill River Great Barrington Road Medical Call

July 17 1:37 p.m. Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road Medical Call

July 18 10:35 a.m. Mutual Aid to Sandisfield Medical Call

July 20 7:09 p.m. Rhoades and Bailey Road Fire Alarm

July 21 8:36 p.m. Rhoades and Bailey Road Fire Alarm

July 23 10:37 a.m. Rhoades and Bailey Road Fire Alarm

July 24 5:22 a.m. Canaan Southfield Road Medical Call

July 24 3:34 p.m. Mill River Southfield Road MVA

July 26 10:09 p.m. Foley Hill Road Medical Call

July 31 2:08 p.m. Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call

Fire Company President David Smith

RAFFLE REMINDER: With the Covid-19-necessitated cancellation of its Annual Pig Roast, the Fire Company is holding a fundraising raffle. The prize is a kayak or paddleboard package, valued at \$3,000, from Clarke Outdoors, in West Cornwall, Connecticut. The winner will have the choice of one of three prizes:

- Two Old Town Loon 106 Kayaks,* an AquaBoundSting Ray hybrid kayak paddle, two Extrasport life vests (one men's and one women's), and a \$500 gift certificate to Clarke Outdoors;
- Two Take Oxbow Search 10.6 Stand Up Paddleboards,* two BIC Paddleboard paddles, two inflatable waist-worn life vests, and a \$500 gift certificate to Clarke Outdoors;
- \$2,000 cash.

Tickets are available for \$10 each at:

www.nmfirecompany.org or from any Fire Company member. Only 1,000 tickets will be sold. Or you may email Fire Company President, David Smith (branchroadcom@yahoo.com) or call 413-429-6680 for more information and to order raffle tickets. The drawing will be held at noon on Labor Day, Monday, September 7, at the fire station in Southfield.

* It may take a couple of weeks for delivery, based on availability, or the item could be replaced by another of equal value.

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

One of the reasons we moved to the northern hemisphere is so we could live in a place with a real autumn. And I don't think there is anywhere in the world that celebrates autumn as well as New England. The days are a perfect length, it is often still warm enough for a swim, the evenings have just the right amount of chill to make them cozy, and everyone is busy harvesting, pickling, and freezing their summer produce. And of course, making jam. I'm still working on pickling but I love making jam, especially peach and raspberry.

Of course, you need something to go with the jam, and lemonade scones are just the thing. As a bonus this month's recipe comes with a short language lesson, though I have converted the recipe to American English.

Australian English = USA English

lemonade = lemon-lime soda, e.g. Sprite

lemon cordial = lemonade

scone = biscuit (sort of)

biscuit = cookie

rock cake = scone (sort of)

plain flour = all purpose flour

autumn = Fall

Scones in Australia (and the U.K.) are more like the biscuits that are served with gravy here in the U.S., just slightly sweeter and smaller. They are quite different from U.S. scones. □

Fiona Kerr



Lemonade Scones

Preheat oven to 400° F

Ingredients

- 3 cups self-raising flour *
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup lemon-lime soda **

- Sift the flour into a large bowl, add the cream, then the soda. Use a butter knife to mix the dough (this helps to retain the bubbles). The dough should be moist but not sticky, add a bit more flour if necessary.
- Turn out onto a floured surface and gently roll or press out to 1" thickness.
- Cut the scones with a cylinder measuring 2"-2.5", re-roll the leftover dough and keep cutting out the circular scones until there is only a small piece of dough left. Roll this bit into a ball; it will bake into a funny shape and is the baker's bonus scone. Alternatively, cut the rolled-out dough into 2"-2.5" squares and gently tap the sides until they're round — it's ok if this makes them a bit higher than 1".
- Brush the top of each scone with a little bit of leftover cream (or milk), place evenly on a baking sheet that has been dusted with flour, and bake for 15 minutes, or until golden.
- Serve warm with jam and whipped cream.

* If you don't have self-raising flour, add 1 teaspoon of baking powder to 1 cup of all purpose flour.

** Make sure to use soda, not lemonade.

These can be made gluten free, but I often need to add an extra 1/2 cup of self-raising flour and a 1/2 teaspoon of baking powder. I cut them into 1.5"-2" squares and tap the edges to make them round. Bake them for the same time.

The storm arrived with bursts of fury at around 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 4. It was gone a few hours later, but the damage from tree fall it left in its wake would last for days. According to newly appointed Director of Emergency Management Monica Zinke, electric service to most of the town of shut down by snapped power lines, and 80 to 85 percent of the town's roads were affected by tree fall. The response, "was a team effort. The Police, Highway, Fire, and Emergency Management all communicated with one another," says Ms. Zinke. "Everyone in town came together to make the response go as well as it did."

By Saturday, August 8, while there was still clean-up on roads and yards, order had been restored. □

Joe Poindexter



photo by Robbi Harvt



photo by Larry Barke



photo by Larry Barke



photo by Ed Harvey



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MEETING THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE AT SBRSD

by Jane Burke

The challenge cannot be overstated. On June 25, the Massachusetts commissioner of education delivered a "Guidance for the Fall Opening of Schools." He wanted a "Preliminary School Re-opening Plan" by July 31, just five weeks later. The Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) responded with an immediate call for volunteers to help craft a plan. From a group of seventy responses, five subcommittees were formed: Teaching and Learning; Student Support Services; Communications; Personnel, Staffing, and Finance; and Buildings and Grounds.

The message from the state was unambiguous:

- Teachers had to provide rigorous, engaging lessons for a required number of hours every day.
- Schools had to be able to provide six-foot spacing between student desks.
- Accommodations for students with special needs had to be robust and effective, so there would be equity in learning for all.

The commissioner asked that three plans be put forward:

- One, the students would not come to school at all but learn remotely.
- Two, the so-called hybrid plan, the students would be split into two groups, each coming to school at separate times and learning remotely the rest.
- Three, all students would attend school, observing all safely precautions, every day.

Periodically, the state commissioner summoned district superintendents to a two-hour conference call to issue amendments and additions to the guidance.

In July, the five subcommittees of SBRSD's School Committee held, via Zoom, a total of thirty-five meetings. Unique among state school districts, SBRSD invited teachers, parents, community members, school committee members, and administrators onto these subcommittees so that all points of view could be represented. Parents and teachers were surveyed about which of the three plan types they favored. The outreach paid dividends. In the Teaching and Learning subcommittee, for instance, many new and engaging approaches to education were brought forward by teachers. Parents' difficulties with remote learning were aired. Administrators listened to concerns as they helped each group develop concrete action plans.

It soon became evident that thinking about learning in this new environment created an opportunity to bring positive change to education. One example: inviting families in for orientation and training so that everyone would understand the remote plan and what

kinds of expectations there would be for students when they did come to school for in-person learning. Another: inspiring teachers to hone their skills in presenting key concepts and craft ways for students to delve more deeply into them on their own. Every aspect of the services needed for English language learners, students with learning plans, and those with social or emotional challenges was addressed in detail. Every inch of space in the buildings was measured to work out six-foot spacing models. The ventilation systems in all buildings was studied. Finally, at a July 30 meeting of the School Committee, the superintendent presented the preliminary plan built on the findings of the subcommittees and the collaborative work of the administrative team. It was unanimously approved.

The next step was to produce the more detailed "Final Re-opening Plan." A deadline of August 10 was extended to August 14 because of the disruptions caused by the August 4 windstorm in western Massachusetts. Then the commissioner issued a directive that the school year would be shortened by ten days so that teachers would have more time for extra preparation and professional development. The planners needed it. By working weekends and late into the night, a final plan was filed on time and posted on the newly designed district website (at sbrsd.org/reopening-task-force).

A statement from Superintendent Regulbuto opens

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the document: "SBRSD School Community has done what it does best and has come together as a united team during this global health crisis and worked tirelessly to serve our students and families in the best ways we could when schools were physically closed." It was, she wrote, "developed with the help of a seventy-person Re-opening Task Force in one of the most successful and productive partnerships in the history of the district."

In the end, the hybrid model was chosen on the basis of two findings. Accommodation of all or most of the students into the buildings with the recommended six-foot spacing would necessitate an expensive conversion of hallways and common spaces, such as gyms and cafeterias, into teaching areas. Also, a parent survey done in July revealed that 70 percent of respondents were opposed to all students returning five days a week. They preferred the remote or hybrid approaches.

On August 13 the SBRSD School Committee voted to support the gradual and safe reopening of our schools. Under this plan, teachers will return on August 27 for ten days of planning and professional development in on-line learning. Students will begin school remotely on September 14 to fix any glitches in the remote learning model and to allow for parents to meet with teachers and administrators to learn about both the technology of remote learning and the new norms required for safety of all when children are in the buildings.

To reduce movement within school buildings, students grades K-8 will remain in their home classroom. Teachers will come to them. Students will be asked to wear masks and stay six feet apart. There will be outdoor mask breaks as appropriate for various age groups. If the infection rate in South County remains low, the



Superintendent Beth Regulbuto with Elementary School Principal Charles Miller

intention is to transition to the hybrid model. Starting September 28, classes will be divided in half, with the first cohort attending school Mondays and Tuesdays, the second Thursdays and Fridays, starting October 1. No students will attend school Wednesdays, which will be used by teachers for planning and professional development and by building maintenance staff to do a thorough cleaning.

The in-school time will be used to introduce key learning objectives, which will then be further explored via remote learning. Remote learning, too, will be fully scheduled. Students will check in with their teachers at the beginning and end of the day.

Families that do not feel comfortable sending their children to school, will have the option of being fully remote. There will also be accommodations for high-risk students who meet specific criteria to have in-person learning every day.

Since teachers who have children are expected to come to school as normal each day, Superintendent Regulbuto is working to try to provide the option their children will be accommodated at the school five days a week, so that these teachers can focus fully on their jobs. Many teachers participated in the crafting of the reopening plan, so it is hoped that the ongoing negotiations with the teachers union will result in a signed "Memorandum of Agreement" in time for the start of school.

The final piece of the puzzle is how to provide safe bus transportation. A second survey of families was sent out August 20 to determine how many families are comfortable with the hybrid model. Once the results of that survey are in hand, the District will be able to lay out bus routes to accommodate all the children who need transportation.

Throughout the planning process, Superintendent Regulbuto has emphasized that the plans are fluid and subject to change at any time. "It is highly likely we could move in and out of remote and hybrid models several times throughout the school year due to Covid-19," she said. "Please note," she added, in recognition of the need for flexibility on all sides, "that parents/guardians retain the right to opt into and out of the hybrid option." □

Jane Burke

SBRSD School Committee Chair



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 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Tuesday 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

WORD SEARCH!

C	F	L	S	E	D	C	L	T	H	T	B	K	S
A	D	L	O	O	E	C	H	H	N	O	U	O	C
M	V	C	U	C	B	E	L	E	E	W	R	N	L
P	I	A	T	S	B	S	I	F	B	N	R	K	A
B	L	N	H	Y	I	U	B	A	O	H	I	A	Y
E	L	T	F	B	E	O	R	R	M	A	T	P	T
L	A	I	I	N	O	H	A	M	I	L	T	O	O
L	G	N	E	E	B	G	R	B	L	L	B	T	N
F	E	A	L	E	R	N	Y	O	L	D	I	N	N
A	N	U	D	R	I	I	A	M	R	L	A	D	A
L	E	H	L	G	E	T	I	U	I	H	I	I	T
L	W	I	W	E	N	E	L	L	V	C	L	T	D
S	S	L	N	H	N	E	H	Y	E	N	D	E	G
A	T	E	N	T	N	M	V	T	R	E	L	E	N



Clues?
 You don't get clues!
 That would be too easy!
 Okay, okay, here's a clue:
 There are 17 hidden words or
 phrases, reading left to right,
 right to left, up to down,
 down to up, but not diagonally

Contributions are needed to continue the paper!

Please fill in the form and send with your contribution to:

New Marlborough 5 Village News, P.O. Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259

YES, I WANT THE *New Marlborough 5 Village News* TO CONTINUE!

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

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Town Times

Board of Selectmen: Every Monday at 6:00 p.m.
Town Administrator: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Planning Board: Second and fourth Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.
Board of Health: First Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
Conservation Commission: Last Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.
Board of Assessors: Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Fire Department training: Every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the fire station
Building Inspector: Monday 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.; or by appointment.
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 — if and when it re-opens:
 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., Tues and Thurs 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Selectmen's Administrative Secretary: Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Dog and Animal Control Officer: Cassie Keeley, (413) 429-7603
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 6

and can be purchased for \$150 by mail or online at www.newmarlborough.gov. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No admittance without a permit after August 15

Emergency calls:

Police, Fire, Medical
911

New Marlborough Highway Department

Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.
 Hours:
 Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244
 (413) 229-8165

We welcome advertisements from businesses owned by New Marlborough residents.

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

NM5VN Editorial Team

Joe Poindexter, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer; Janice Boults, Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Larry Burke, Robbi Hartt, Barbara Lowman, David Lowman, Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Sandra Fusco-Walker. Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger, Fiona Kerr, Mary Richie Smith. Index: Donna Weaver

NM5VN Board of Directors

Roy Blount, Jr., Larry Burke, Barbara Lowman, Deb O'Brien, Joe Poindexter, Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Mary R. Smith, Nan O'Shaughnessy Smith, and Tara White

New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

also online at
www.nm5vn.org

The next issue will be dated October 2020.
 All copy must be submitted no later than September 18.
 For advertising, contact Barbara Lowman, tel: 229-2369
 PO Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259
5villagenews@gmail.com

New Marlborough 5 Village News
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SERVICE SECTOR 9/20

- ♦ **Dellea.biz Computer Services:** has provided local residents with on-site Windows computer repairs and technical support since 1996. Book appointments online at <https://dellea.biz> or call (413) 528-1141.
- ♦ **Design+Planning:** Christopher Blair; Since 1986, creative, budget-aware design. Achieve your goals for additions, alterations to an existing home or new construction. (413)528-4960. chris@design-planning.com.
- ♦ **Fine Jewelry:** Designers and manufacturers; custom orders/commissions welcome; expert repairs. 45 years experience. Sachs Reisman, Inc. 25 Maple Ave., Sheffield (413)229-0050
- ♦ If you are looking for short term rehabilitation, physical therapy, senior living, skilled nursing or memory care, look no further than **Noble Horizons**, proud recipient of Medicare's premier 5-star rating. Just over the border in Salisbury, CT. www.NobleHorizons.org 860-435-9851; 17 Cobble Road Salisbury, CT.
- ♦ **One call does it all!:** Vinyl siding cleaning; pressure washing; deck refinishing; floors refinished; window washing; odd landscape jobs; all odd jobs. David Goewey, (413)229-2787
- ♦ **Susan M. Smith:** Attorney At Law; Concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Elder Law, Real Estate and Zoning Matters. ssmithlaw@barringtonlawoffice.com or (413)528-4300
- ♦ **Reiner White & Sons, Inc:** A family-run general contractor business serving the MA and CT area since 1988 - new construction, additions, remodeling, and more. Licensed and insured. Call (413) 229-8450 for free consultation.
- ♦ **Shift Happens:** causing stress, anxiety, depression. Take steps – feel better, in life, love, work, school. Psychotherapy works. Adults/adolescents. Susan Winston, Great Barrington 818-618-0775

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