

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume XV, Number 9

December 2024

Your Help, Needed and Appreciated

By the Sandisfield Times Staff

Fifteen years ago, a group of Sandisfield residents got together to establish a monthly newspaper that would focus on the news and issues of special concern to this town. Our goal was to make the paper a means for connection, communication, and community-building. Staffed at the time and still run by volunteers, The Sandisfield Times has remained true to that mission, reporting the kind of locally sourced stories that matter to us but which seldom run in bigger regional news sources.

We at the Times have had a busy year marked by the departure of founder Simon Winchester and the embrace of new directions. We have expanded our board, including new voices with different perspectives and new skills. We've also expanded our website to allow easier access to our articles as well as quicker reporting of fast-breaking stories.

We depend on our readers for the financial support that makes all of this possible. Our expenses include printing, design, web fees, and other costs.

Our thanks to all who have contributed so generously in the past, and we hope you will continue to support your community newspaper. If you are new to this publication, we ask that you consider sending a check of any amount to PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255. Or donate online by clicking the "Donate" button on our website at www.SandisfieldTimes.org.

Thank you, and please accept our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season. 🍷

Drought: Summer and Fall WE MAY SEE IT AGAIN NEXT YEAR



Ben Garver, The Berkshire Eagle. Used with permission.

Editor's Note: The Butternut Fire in November burned 1,650 acres of forest in Great Barrington and Sheffield. The drought Tom Christopher writes about here was a major factor in its spread, which easily could have been east toward Sandisfield.

By Tom Christopher

"Schizophrenic" is the best description of the last six months of weather in Sandisfield.

We started the summer with record heat and above average rainfall, creating a tropical microclimate that had this writer battling all sorts of fungal infections in his vegetable garden. Then Nature turned off the tap.

September was bone dry, and October drier. During the latter month, there was almost no measurable precipitation and the temperatures remained unseasonably high, breaking records on Halloween and climbing into the 80s on October's last day.

This abnormal heat promoted evaporation of what little moisture was in the soil, drying up streams, and drastically lowering river flows. One notable response to this aridity was

Cont'd on p.7

On the Road

READY FOR WINTER?

By Tom Christopher

A late November check-in with Dave Waldron, our DPW Superintendent, found the crew busy assembling winter plowing equipment, a process that always reveals needs for repairs and adjustments.

Dave also spoke of a program to get the gravel roads in shape for winter by clearing the roadside ditches and adding more "run-outs," strategically placed gaps in the ditches' outer walls that allow accumulated run-off to drain down adjacent slopes so that the water doesn't erode the roads.

Residents who live along the gravel roads will have heard the giant leaf blower the Department has been running along the margins of the gravel roads to clear out accumulations of fallen leaves – these can act as dams to back up run-off during storms and flood or washout the roads.



Revised School Agreement Under Review

The revision of the Regional District Agreement between the towns of Otis and Sandisfield regarding their joint operation of the Farmington River Regional School District is currently under review by the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

The proposal for the revision was unanimously passed by the seven-member School Committee in September and subsequently endorsed by the FRRSD Union.

The next step is for DESE to issue a preliminary approval of the plan and if that happens the question will be put to a vote at special town meetings in Otis and Sandisfield. For background on the proposal, see our article on this subject on page 5 of the November Times last month.

How Sandisfield Voted

507 TOTAL VOTES

PRESIDENT

De La Cruz	1
Harris.	280
Oliver.	2
Stein	4
Trump	212
Blank	5

U.S. SENATOR

Warren	278
Deaton	207
Blank	22

REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS

Neal.	225
Milleron	242
Blank	40

For other races, visit
www.sandisfieldma.gov

BALLOT QUESTIONS

Question 1	Yes 292	No 165
Question 2	Yes 265	No 210
Question 3	Yes 265	No 189
Question 4	Yes 193	No 265
Question 5	Yes 205	No 254
Question 6	Yes 282	No 153

Please join us
for refreshments
and holiday fun!

A Penny Auction Music with Vin

Friday, December 13th
1:30 p.m.
(please come in through
back entrance)

Berkshire
Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center

Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center, 7 Sandisfield Rd.

DON'T FORGET TO BUY YOUR HOLIDAY STAMPS AT THE SANDISFIELD POST OFFICE!

Poll Workers Train for Election

By Jane Kaufman, Community Voices Editor

Reprinted from *The Berkshire Eagle*, November 4, 2024.

Used with permission.

The hand-counted paper ballot is considered the gold standard among poll watchers. While it's labor intensive, time consuming and inefficient, it's still being used in Sandisfield and several other towns in Berkshire County and beyond.

And it has Town Clerk Douglas Miner concerned. He expects to see at least 550 ballots, possibly the most the town's hand-cranked gun-metal gray ballot box has ever held. Before the election, Miner held an hour-long training to prepare poll workers for the consequential night.

With 703 registered voters in Sandisfield, 140 voters have already cast ballots by mail locally, 72 voters cast ballots in person early and six local residents mailed in ballots from overseas.

... At the Old Town Hall on Friday, eight voting booths were set up for early voting, with the ballot box at the back of the room.

"So, in the teams of two, one person has the ballot and calls out the vote, and the other person tallies," Miner told six poll workers who came to the training. "The teams will be made up of different political affiliations: tripartisan — Republican, Democrat and unenrolled.

"It's good if both people can see the ballot," Miner said. "I do not anticipate that anybody would be reading things off intentionally that they're not seeing, but it can happen accidentally. And then if there's a mark you have a question about, you can just call me or Amanda [Leavenworth, assistant town clerk] over.

"But, again," he told them. "The intent of the voter is the main thing we're looking for."

Miner knows the election may be called well before Sandisfield poll workers have finished their counting.

"We still do everything by the book and do it the right way because it's very important that right now everybody can see that everything is transparent and clear and obvious," Miner said.

... Most of the training entailed tallying procedures. "I just want to get everybody in the practice of doing this because, on the night of, it's going to be late, and it's going to be hectic," Miner told the group. "I'm going to be tired and dehydrated."

But he won't be undernourished. While poll workers in some towns have structured potlucks on Election Day, Miner is planning to order breakfast for the group from the Southfield Store in Southfield and dinner from McGrane's On The Green in Winsted, Conn.

Miner and Leavenworth prepared a pile of sample ballots for the poll workers to tally using a page with a grid and numbers across the top. He explained how to fill in the marks.



Douglas Miner, town clerk of Sandisfield, fills in poll workers about how to tally votes at Old Town Hall.

Photo: Jane Kaufman, The Berkshire Eagle

As Melissa Bye recorded her fourth ballot, she realized she'd filled out her tally sheet incorrectly. "My bad, I misunderstood," she said. "We're going to start over."

At 19, Mira Shea is helping tally the results of her own first vote along with all the others cast in Sandisfield. Shea works in the assessor's office and has already helped tally votes of the Sept. 3 state primary. She called that, "pretty chill." "There wasn't a lot of people, so it was good practice," she said. She graduated from Simsbury High School in 2023, tried a semester of college "and decided it wasn't for me." She said the training was helpful just to see the ballot.

"I think I know who I'm voting for," Shea said. "But I'm still doing a lot of research to figure it out."

Ron Pachulski appreciated the training although he, too, worked the state primary. "It's important," he said. "We can't afford to be having glitches Tuesday evening at 8:30 on this when the clock is ticking and we need to get the results ASAP."

In 2016, Sandisfield had 614 registered voters. He attributes the uptick in voter registration partly to a group of second homeowners who made Sandisfield their permanent address during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, he said the race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump may have inspired some to register for the first time.

For his first time, Miner has roped off an area near the piano for observers to watch the count.

"Although it's so hard just to get people to count from 8 to 10 [p.m.]," he said. "I'm not sure we'll get people to come to watch people count from 8 to 10. We shall see."

Miner told the poll workers that on Election Day, there will be a strict no-talking policy when voters are in the room unless the voter has a question.

Ask Me for Help

NEW TOWN HALL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

By *Laura McArthur, Town AdMin*

I was hired in October at the Sandisfield Town Hall as the new Administrative Assistant to the Select Board and Town Manager and as Assistant Tax Collector/Treasurer.

I grew up in Sandisfield and moved away to go to school; however, I returned to Berkshire County several years ago. I previously worked for the Town of Monterey as Select Board Secretary and the Office Assistant.

I have begun to take some tasks from our Town Manager, Janey Snyder, so if you need help with any of the following tasks, please feel free to reach out to me at 413-258-4711, ext. 3.

- Signing up for the Town's Code Red Alert system
- Getting in touch with various Town Departments
- Reaching out to the Building Inspector/Building Department
- Obtaining information about your tax bills/ payment questions
- Questions about information on the Town website
- Changing your address with the Tax Collector
- Obtaining Transfer Station stickers

FROM THE TOWN WEBSITE:

Town Hall Hours of Operation

TOWN MANAGER

Phone: (413) 258-4711 Ext 1
By appointment

TOWN CLERK

Phone: (413) 258-4711 Ext 2
M: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
T: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
W: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Or by appointment

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Phone: (413) 258-4711 Ext 3
M: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
T: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
W: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Th: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Or by appointment

TOWN ACCOUNTANT

Phone: (413) 258-4711 Ext 5
By appointment

ASSESSORS

Phone: (413) 258-4711 Ext 6
T: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
W: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Th: 9:00 am - 2:00pm

Transfer Station Recyclables Donation

BOTTLES AND CANS

The Transfer Station, with the help of George Munson, has started an initiative to donate the returnable bottle and can proceeds to the Sandisfield American Legion Post 456. If you can help out by separating your returnable cans and plastic bottles from other recyclable items, it would be greatly appreciated. Please no glass bottles.

If you have any questions, please contact Laurie McArthur, Administrative Assistant, at (413) 258- 4711 ext 3.


















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Thank you to those who generously donated in November to our 2024 Appeal.

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Katherine Johnson

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Peter Levine

& Ellen Croibier

Allen & Sheila Liberman

Barbara Lynn & Paul Jacoby

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DECEMBER 24, 25, 26

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AND NEW YEAR'S DAY**

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101 North Main St., Sandisfield, MA (Corner of Routes 8 & 57)
413-258-4477 • List of events at www.NewBostonInn.com



Select Board Dispatches

By Janey Snyder, Town Manager

Tax Rates Announced

By Janey Snyder, Town Manager

Happy Holidays! As the year comes to a close the Select Board has been working to support the Town Hall staff in the tax rate and budget processes:

The tax rate has officially been set. Tax bills will be sent out within the first two weeks of December and will be due 30 days after mailing. The Select Board


voted to approve a split tax rate. Here's what the rates will look like this year:

- Residential Rate: \$9.02 per \$1,000 of assessed value
- Personal Property Rate: \$14.60 per \$1,000 of assessed value
- Commercial/Industrial Rate: \$14.68 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The budget process for Fiscal Year 2026 has begun. All Departments/Boards/Committees have started to submit their proposed budgets to be reviewed with the Town Manager.

The Select Board meets at Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Rd on Mondays at 6:30 p.m. Zoom participation is available. Visit the Town website to confirm the date of the next meeting.

To request an agenda item, please contact Laurie McArthur at lmcarthur@sandisfieldma.gov no later than the Wednesday before the upcoming Select Board meeting.


Don't forget to subscribe to Town E-Alerts for important updates and announcements and CodeRED for all emergency notifications at www.sandisfieldma.gov. 



FROM THE TOWN WEBSITE:

Employment Opportunity: Building Commissioner/ Zoning Enforcement Officer

The Town of Sandisfield is seeking a qualified individual to take on the role of Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Part-time, flexible hours, two (2) in-person office hours required. Duties include, but are not limited to, enforcement of State Building Code and Town Zoning Bylaws, conducting plan review, issuing building permits, and investigating complaints. Must be proficient with PermitEyes. Must be a certified Building Commissioner, or certified MA Building Inspector with ability to obtain certification as a Building Commissioner within 18 months of appointment. Employment application and complete job description available under "Employment." Position open until filled. Submit application to: Manager@sandisfieldma.gov. AA/EOE 



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with us!

The Knox Trail Inn



Live
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every
weekend!

INDOOR CORNHOLE EVERY WEDNESDAY 6PM
TRIVIA NIGHT EVERY THURSDAY 7PM (closed Nov 28)

We make fun happen!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 7th Rusted Chains Band 8pm

DEC 8TH 2PM MUSICAL BINGO
TOYS FOR TOTS FUNDRAISER
Bring a Smile to a Child this Christmas!

Dec 14th Brett Potter Duo 6pm

DEC 21ST KNOX CHRISTMAS PARTY!
Open House with Dani Stevens 1-4pm
Pick-Up Line Band 8-11pm

★ Merry Christmas!
(DEC 25th - CLOSED)

Dec 28th Jason & Trev 6pm

NEW YEARS EVE
ROCK 201!! 9pm

OPEN MON WED THUR 12-9PM ★ FRI & SAT 12-10PM ★ SUN 12-9PM ★ CLOSED TUESDAY ★ 413-269-4400 ★ 1898 EAST OTIS RD (RT 23) EAST OTIS, MA

Butternut Fire a Warning of What May Come

Cont'd from p.1

an upsurge in wildfires, with more than 400 flaring up across Massachusetts in October and November. Sandisfield was spared this fall when a rapidly expanding forest fire in Great Barrington spilled over the border into Sheffield before being contained.

There's a temptation to regard the weather flipflop we've experienced this summer and fall as a freak, an aberration. In the past, it would have been just that.

However, climate scientists have been predicting just this pattern for quite a while. In 2014, for example a national climate assessment derived from observations and research by 15 Federal agencies including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior, and the National Science Foundation predicted that as temperatures continue to rise (a trend that was already apparent in weather records for our region dating back to the founding of the National Weather Service in 1870) our region would experience an increase in average annual precipitation, but that this would come in fewer, more violent events concentrated in the early and late parts of the year. Hotter summers would result in greater evaporation and droughts lasting through the fall.

The last update of the national climate assessment published in 2018 reported symptoms of climate change that any attentive resident of our region had already noticed.

Shorter, warmer winters for example, have become obvious to Sandisfield motorists who cannot fail to have noticed that these have changed the timing and severity of the "mud season" that historically afflicted our dirt roads in early spring.

Maple syrup makers have had to cope with less predictability in the onset and duration of the tree tapping season.

The fall foliage season, whose formerly glorious colors were a mainstay of the tourist industry, has become less reliable, frequently aborted by drought.

Neighbors have reported the drying up of residential wells this past fall that had

previously provided a reliable flow.

Such symptoms are concerning, but the emerging threat of forest fires is of a different caliber. This makes the need for action obvious and impossible to ignore any longer. We will need a societal response in a continued move away from consumption of fossil fuels. But there is also much that an individual can do, and in this region famed for ingenuity, that could have a big impact.

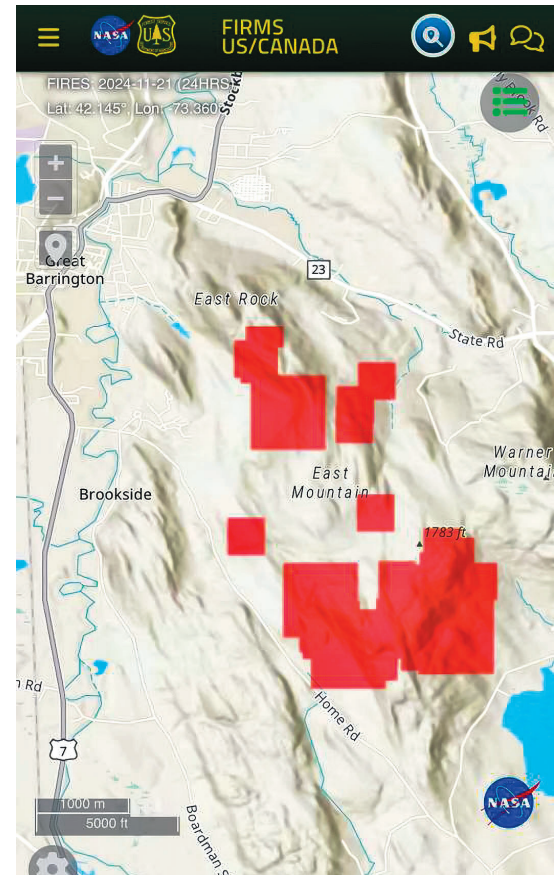
One way to attack climate change that draws on this reporter's experience as a horticulturist is to make changes in our personal landscapes.

A reduction in the use of synthetic fertilizers for lawns, gardens, and farmers' fields can provide a significant benefit. The largest component of such products are typically nitrates which are produced by a process that uses natural gas as both a feedstock and a fuel; to produce one ton of fertilizer nitrates requires the consumption of 33 thousand cubic feet of natural gas. And once spread on the garden, turf, or agricultural field, synthetic nitrates begin escaping into the atmosphere as "laughing gas," nitrous oxide, which is 300 times as potent as carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.

Converting your lawn to less nitrogen hungry turf grasses such as fine fescues (which are also more drought resistant than the traditional Kentucky bluegrass and require far less frequent mowing) can be an important personal contribution to this crisis.

Getting your garden soil tested so that you avoid unnecessary fertilization is not only a way to save money but also to reduce your personal contribution to climate change. Farmers, and gardeners, too, can add fertility to the soil without the use of fertilizers by planting cover crops during the off-season.

Homeowners can sow clover into their lawns – clover not only has the ability to convert nitrogen from the atmosphere into a natural source of nutrients for the grass, it will also make your lawn more supportive of pollinating insects such as our embattled wild bees.



The boxes show where the fire spread across East Mountain behind the Great Barrington Fairgrounds, and south into Sheffield. It was finally brought under control, thanks to great effort by firefighters and, ultimately, rain and snow that arrived just in time.

Landscaping with native, locally indigenous plants, which as a group tend to be more drought-tolerant than traditional, nursery-bred garden plants, will help to keep your surroundings green and less flammable during dry spells. They will also do a far better job of feeding the local wildlife which is one of Sandisfield's great attractions.

I am sure that foresters, farmers, and landscape maintenance professionals, as well as ingenious local residents (Sandisfield is not short of them) can all add ideas for reducing our community's contribution to climate change. Our region has a long history of taking the initiative when confronted with challenges. This particular challenge has too often been presented as solely a matter of doing without.

I believe that it can also provide stimulus for a move to a healthier and more satisfying relationship to nature, to biologically richer and more beautiful human landscapes, and ultimately a more resilient, less disaster-prone local environment. The difficulties of the last six months may have been just the wake-up call we all needed. 🍷



Sandisfield Arts Center

Local Contractors Make Major Improvements at Arts Center

WORK IN PROGRESS AS WINTER APPROACHES

By Hilde Weisert and Jean Atwater-Williams

Those signs of construction at Route 57 and Hammertown Road are the beginning of major improvements at the Sandisfield Arts Center.

When we open for our 30th anniversary season next spring, we will add to our already accessible space (we added a handicap lift in 2014) an energy-efficient, climate-friendly HVAC system as well as major Gallery improvements and the infrastructure for a kitchen that will be completed by 2026. Also planned for 2026 is a storage shed addition to house sets from plays and other equipment that until now have been scattered around town in the homes and barns of our volunteers.

All this work is thanks to some significant donations from community members, foundations, and additional fundraising that we're working on now.

With increasingly warm summers, air conditioning will make our audiences more comfortable, set us apart from many other area cultural institutions, and support our town's Green Committee goal of reducing our carbon footprint by replacing our ancient oil heating system.

★ SUMMARY OF THE BUILDING'S LONG HISTORY ★

A comprehensive history is being written of the building and its fascinating but completely distinct eras under different owners, the Baptists, the Jews, and the Arts Center. From Church to Synagogue to Arts Center is expected to be available early next spring. Sales proceeds will benefit the Sandisfield Arts Center which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2025.

The building dates to 1839, originally as a Baptist Church. Following the Civil War in the 1860s and a failed railroad scheme in the 1870s, Sandisfield's population including church membership declined precipitously. The Baptist Society dissolved in the 1910s. In 1921, the Sons of Abraham congregation bought the building to serve the growing Jewish community in the Montville section, converting the building to an orthodox synagogue. The Jewish congregation dwindled and by the 1980s the building was again dormant and in sore need of rehabilitation.

In 1995, a group called the Sandisfield Arts and Restoration Committee, Inc., formed to restore the building as a home for a community arts center which it has been for almost thirty years. Major repairs to the foundation, the roof and the interior were completed by 2004. The building is listed (2006) on the National Register of Historic Places as "The Montville Baptist Church."



Pouring the footings (by 413 Concrete) with CW Nelson's Excavator in the background.

Photo: Jean Atwater-Williams


The kitchen will mean we can host many more community events, cooking lessons, weddings, etc. And the refurbished Gallery will match the first-rate quality of recent shows drawing artists from throughout the Berkshires.

Making these improvements to a historic building is complicated, so we are grateful to two town residents, master architects Nick Elton and Jerry Herman, who know the building inside out and are generously donating their time (lots of their time) to lead the project. Board members Jean Atwater-Williams, Susie Crofut, Suzanne Oconnell, and Hilde Weisert round out the project team, with the help of other Board members and volunteers.

Chuck Nelson (CW Nelson Landscaping here in town) did the drainage work and excavation for the shed. Steve Crump who did carpentry for previous renovations is doing the carpentry.

You'll be able to see all this in late May or early June 2025 when we're inviting everyone to a celebration weekend featuring an Open House, Gallery ribbon-cutting and spring show, music, and family activities.

In the words of Susie Crofut, who has been part of the Arts Center from the very beginning, "We are proud of the vision and the commitment to make our unique and very special venue the best it can be – for today's young and old in Sandisfield and surrounding towns, and for the future."

Coming soon on the Connect Sandisfield-Facebook group: A survey to find out what you'd like to see in coming seasons at the Sandisfield Arts Center. 

What Happened to “The Mini?”

BUT FIRST, WHAT WAS THE MINI?

By Ron Bernard

The Mini was one of the coolest things to come out of the early days of the Arts Center in the late-1990s.

At that time, Arts Center president Dr. Ron Myers and teams of volunteers were working madly to transform the former Montville Church/Synagogue into an Arts Center. The teams cleared the lots, making urgent repairs to the building, and sprucing up the interior so that the programs could be scheduled.

A miniature model of the church building, it was built in 1999 by Sandisfield Center resident Richard Migot.

Liana Toscanini recalled that period and the reason for the miniature replica. She told *The Times*, “It was a marketing idea because we couldn’t always put people in the building, especially during renovations. It was a way to raise public awareness about the restoration and the continuing need for financial support from the community.

Photographs of the church and grounds when it was under repair include views of the Mini. The model was also featured in parades in towns in south county, particularly during Sandisfield’s Memorial Day events.



The former Montville Church with the Mini out front.

Photo by Richard Migot, 1999

Roberta Myers remembered, “We worked hard for months to make the grounds and building presentable. Looking back, it wasn’t always pleasant, but everyone was motivated, and we made sure to have fun. The model was a symbol of the commitment and the future, and we were proud to show it off.”



Ron Myers and unidentified assistants display the Mini in area parades, 1999.

Photos: Arts Center files

Curiously, there are no written accounts of the Mini. As to its whereabouts now, no one we contacted remembers what happened to it.

If you know anything about the Mini and if it still exists, please let me know as soon as possible. Contact me at Ronbernard@aol.com. 🐰



Two by Mary

A bobcat was photographed crossing Town Hill Road by Officer Mary Bredenfoerder while on patrol in early November. Another time she spotted a mature bald eagle perched near a Sandisfield roadway. She posted both photos on Connect Sandisfield's Facebook page.



NEW BOSTON CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday, December 1st
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Christmas Worship Service

Tuesday, December 24th
5:30 p.m - 7:00 p.m
Christmas Eve Sing-Along

4 Sandisfield Road
Sandisfield, MA 01255
newbostoncongregationalchurch.org



Annual Holiday Fair!

12/7/2024 10AM-2PM

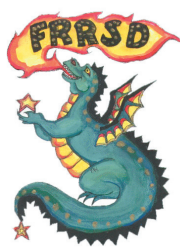
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AT 11 AM**

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School Days

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILY NEWS

Adapted by Sandisfield Times Staff

In her November newsletter to parents, Laurie Flower, principal of the Farmington River Elementary School, wrote that a highlight for the month was the Veterans Day Assembly and Brunch.

She wrote, "We came together as a school to honor and celebrate the veterans in our community. It was heartwarming to see our students show such respect and curiosity as they learned about service, sacrifice, and gratitude. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, contributed, and supported this meaningful event, including the PTA, who provided a grant to purchase supplies – it left a lasting impression on us all."


Also to parents, she added a note about how to encourage their student to excel in school:

"Reading at home is one of the most powerful ways to support your child's learning and growth. Research shows that students who read at home perform better in school, develop stronger vocabulary, and are more likely to enjoy reading as they grow."



"Even a few minutes of reading together each evening can make a big difference, fostering a love of stories, new ideas, and learning that lasts a lifetime. Whether it's a picture book, a chapter book, or an interesting article, reading helps children strengthen their skills and opens up a world of possibilities."

And it's not just "readin' and writin'," it's also "rithmatic."

The principal described how kindergartners are becoming math aware. "In math," she wrote, "Early K students have been learning about and exploring with 10 frames and number lines. These visual tools help students develop number sense by providing a visual representation of a number to show its value. Students had fun using several different types of manipulatives to help practice using their 10 frames and number lines." 



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- Forest Management Plans
- Chapter 61/A/B Program
- Timber Sales
- Boundary Marking
- GIS Mapping
- Foresters for the Birds
- Wildlife Habitat Improvement
- Recreational Trail Layout
- Climate Forestry



The Librarian's Corner

Monday, 9:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Closed Thursday, Friday and Sunday

Phone: 258-4966

Email: sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com

Our new website: sandisfieldlibrary.org

**Please note the library will be closed
December 23 through the 28th and
on New Year's Day.**

EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY

On December 19 at 6:30 p.m., the Sandisfield Woman's Book Group will meet at the Library to discuss the book, *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett.

Start your new year off with the **Massachusetts Center for the Books 2025 Reading Challenge**. Each month a different category of book to is selected to read. Categories include could be a book published about the year you were born or one you are drawn to by its cover. Visit the massbook.org/reading-challenge to learn more or stop by the Sandisfield library.

The Sandisfield Library has made the transition to the CW/Mars library system. For the past few months, we have have been cataloguing, re-cataloguing, and learning the nuances of a new library software system. What does that mean to you? Well, if you have a CW/Mars library card already, it means you are good to go. If not, we'll set you up with one. Being part of the CW/Mars systems expands access to more libraries, therefore more books. If we don't have the book, some other library does and we can get it for you. You can pick up and drop off books at all the CW/Mars libraries, including this one. It's exciting! 📖

LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY SHELVES (ADULT FICTION AND NON-FICTION)

Revenge of the Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

The Blue Hour by Paula Hawkins

The Grey Wolf by Louise Penny

Desolation Code by Clive Cussler

Eleanor of Avignon by Elizabeth Delozier

Now or Never by Janet Evanovich

Half Baked Harvest Quick and Cozy by Tieghan Gerard

Tooth and Claw by Craig Johnson

Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi

What the Chicken Knows by Montgomery Sy

The City and Its Uncertain Waters by Haruki Murakami

Flint Kill Creek by Joyce Carol Oates

The Mirror by Nora Roberts

Trial by Fire by Danielle Steel

Paradise Bronx by Ian Frazier

War by Bob Woodward

YOUNG ADULT / OLDER CHILDREN

Hot Mess by Jeff Kinney

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A PORSCHE ON FOX ROAD

By Karen Garfield

That's just the title
of this poem.

A catchy phrase.
To get things goin'.

For locals who've seen,
The road I reference.
Know this to be,
An unlikely occurrence.

Maybe a Porsche
By accident turned.
Maybe a Porche,
That never returned.

Maybe a Porche
From an urban visitor,
One with a Rolex,
And a Fitbit pedometer.

A New Yorker, of course.
Who else would tread.
Into the woods.
With tires to shred.

Going like 60,
On Fox you're in trouble.
Slide into a tree.
The forest, see double.

Once the ice
settles into the road.
Traction is scant.
Time to get towed.

If you're lucky,
You'll just skid a little.
Clutch the wheel.
Hope. Settle.

The road connects
Silverbrook, New Hartford.
The road detects
Pretenders, impostered.



Planes trains and automobiles

Traveling differently this holiday?



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Discovering Sandisfield

TRUTH IN A BUMPER STICKER

by Ron Bernard

As long-time resident Connie Canty recalls, some thirty years ago members of the Sandisfield Historical Society were talking about how to raise awareness about the Town.

Several admitted to having the same experience -- acquaintances saying, "Sandisfield? Where the hell is that?"

Someone said, "We can work with that" and the Society members instantly created a bumper sticker reading, "Where the H... Is Sandisfield?"



Our bumper sticker.

For about ten years, wherever local cars roamed, curious people saw the message, asked the question, and learned a thing or two about our unique town.

Brilliant.

Decades later awareness of Sandisfield remains low. The advent of social media and this newspaper has made a dent, but lack of industry and commercial establishments are formidable barriers to our town becoming a destination.

BUT WAIT!!

We have an exploitable asset in our town's natural features and the simple lay of the land.

In recent years outdoor enthusiasts have discovered Sandisfield. Hanging Mountain is drawing rock climbers from across the state and beyond. Hikers are delighted with Sandisfield's new six-trail, thirteen-mile system. Word of mouth and social media are drawing climbers.

And now our roads, both the newly paved and the unimproved, are becoming attractions for cycling and car clubs.

On a lovely Sunday afternoon last month, about fifty colorful, powerful, and impractical cars (think Ferrari and Lamborghini) roared through town, albeit at posted speed limits. It was a spectacle worthy of a fee, I thought. Let's have more of these! The club had previously informed the Town that they would be coming.



The Gravel Grinders. Organizer Han Kawai, right.

Photo: Ron Bernard



Heading down Beech Plain Road.

Photo: Jack Dennerlein

Small groups and individual cyclists and motor cyclists have been a fixture here for years but on Saturday, October 5, I encountered something different, even astonishing -- a large group of cyclists on public *dirt* roads.

I stopped at a rally point on South Beech Plain Road to chat with Han Kawai of Pittsfield-based Berkshire Velo. Formed just before the pandemic, the club already has six hundred members from the region. Its mission is to promote group riding in the Berkshires and "to better the community and ourselves through the sport of cycling."

Event organizer Kawai said, "We hold monthly 'Bike-and-Brew' rides from local breweries, and host numerous cycling events like this one which we call the 'Fall Foliage Gravel Grinder.'"

RIDING LOCAL

Beech Plain resident Jack Dennerlein recently joined the group and was part of that event. He told the Times, "I became aware of Berkshire Velo in 2019 when bikers passed by my place on North Beech Plain Road. Just before this ride I saw a temporary sign alerting residents and drivers that bikers were coming. I managed to sign up in time for the 'short' 46-mile course.

"Beech Plain Road runs about five miles from Otis Wood Lands to the former Silverbrook Café. It is an amazing stretch of uninterrupted good condition dirt road with manageable climbs and descents.

"Because of an elevation variation, most of the riding time is uphill. It took me five hours to cover it. Experienced riders in this group did it in less than four hours. I am an avid rider in decent shape, but this was one of the toughest events I have done."

THE GRAVEL GRINDER

That is what I saw taking place. About seventy-five mostly experienced riders signed up for one of two dirt-road courses of 46 or 66 miles. The event started in Tyringham and meandered through Otis and Sandisfield.

I asked how Sandisfield was selected and about the experience. "We were here before and liked it very much," Han said. Will you be back? "Definitely." For information, contact berkshirevelo@gmail.com.

"From small seeds, grow mighty trees." This saying may be an apt metaphor for Sandisfield's prospects as a nature and outdoors destination which could lead to bigger things.

Time for a new bumper sticker? 🇺🇸

NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org

DECEMBER EVENTS

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays unless otherwise posted. Please visit sandisfieldma.gov or call 258-4711 for information.

Playgroup on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Otis Town Hall. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. No pre-registration is necessary. Led by Nina Carr. This fun program includes free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet up with friends and meet new friends! For confirmation of dates, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Coffee Hour on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex. Snacks and conversation! For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Chair Yoga with Wendy Larsen on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on 3 Silverbrook Road, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

New Boston Church Christmas Worship Service on Sunday, December 1 at 10:00 a.m. This is the first Sunday of advent and will prepare participants for the Christmas season. Pastor Eric will read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20 and preach briefly about the reason for the season. For more information and to view the calendar, visit newbostoncongregationalchurch.org. All are welcome. The New Boston Congregational Church is located on Route 57.

Annual Holiday Fair on Saturday, December 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57 co-sponsored by the Sandisfield Historical Society and the Recreation Committee. Over 40 vendors, holiday crafting, and Penny Auction to benefit the Sandisfield Scholarship Fund. Santa arrives at 11:00 a.m.

Cookie Swap on Sunday, December 8 at 1:00 p.m. at the Historic 1737 New Boston Inn on 101 North Main Street (corner of Routes 8 and 57). Bring 36 festive cookies

on a platter and a container to take home your 36 different cookies and your platter. If you can help with appetizers for the event, please do! Reservations requested (413-258-4477).

Community Christmas Sing-along on Tuesday, December 24 at 5:30 p.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church on Route 57. Come and sing (or just listen to) carols and Christmas songs both sacred and secular. Free community event but donations to help support the church are welcome.



Annual Holiday Open Studios at Whiting Mills in Winsted, Connecticut on Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Resident and guest artists. Food truck. Free admission and parking.

Otis Community Christmas Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 7, at Otis Town Hall at 4:00 p.m. Hot chocolate, carolers, Santa. Bring the family. All welcome.

Holiday Marketplace and Gallery of Wreaths on Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge. Unique wreaths, swags, decorations, gifts, and more. Select from an assortment of holiday-blooming amaryllis and paperwhites in decorative clay containers, succulent arrangements, garland, hanging terrariums, and other gift ideas.

Shop, Sip & Stroll on Saturday, December 14 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. in downtown Great Barrington. Sponsored by the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. On-street vendors, model train at St. James, store specials, bonfire, music, fireworks, food, and more.

The Cookie Walk on Sunday, December 15 at 10:00 a.m. at Undermountain Elementary School in Sheffield. Book fair, vendor fair, and baked goods.

Gingerbread House Make and Decorate on Sunday, December 15 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Otis Town Hall. No drop-ins, preregistration (townofotisrec@gmail.com) by December 1. Free.

Berkshire Grown Winter Farmers Market on Saturday, December 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Housy Dome on 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including greens, winter squash, root crops, apples, cheese, meats, honey, maple syrup, baked goods, and more. Local musicians perform.

ONLINE EVENTS

A Farm and Garden Show with Sandisfield Residents Bill Taylor and Jaye Alison Moscariello streamed every Monday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at berkshireradio.org.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Holiday Shop Hop on Friday, December 6 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. in downtown Lee. Sip and Stroll with local businesses extending hours. Restaurants offering thematic specials. Tree lighting at 6:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Lee Chamber of Commerce.

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



P.O. Box 584
Sandisfield, MA 01255

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Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584,

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The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form at left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Classified ads, 30 words or less, are free.

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