

Local yokel

WEST
STOCKBRIDGE
APRIL 2017

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*Felix the Cat, comfy in a basket of scarfs at the West Stockbridge holiday stroll.
Photo by David Edgecomb.*

A SALUTE TO FELIX THE CAT



By Doane Perry

"Everyone's pet cat—Felix—rest in peace, our faithful downtown friend. Felix passed away yesterday due to overwhelming health issues. He will be missed!" Posted on the West Stockbridge Facebook page on March 17.

The day after the sad news about Felix's passing was posted on the West Stockbridge Facebook page, the post received 1,514 hits, a remarkable tally for a town that claims 1,650 full-time residents.

Felix was a yellow tiger cat "owned" by Henry and Marji Baldwin and the rest of the staff of Baldwin's Hardware store. (Henry says that Marji should be credited as Felix's primary caretaker; he was just the landlord.) Family lore says that Felix was born on April Fool's Day in 2000, so he would have been 17 in a couple of weeks, a good old age for a cat. Felix started out living in the barn behind Baldwin Hardware. When she was 7 or 8, Henry's daughter Keegan (now 24) persuaded Felix to come into the store.

Felix's favorite place was the counter of Baldwin's Hardware, but he was equally at home and loved all around town. Stay tuned for future news about a memorial to Felix on a gravestone behind the hardware store. (Meanwhile, check out YouTube for songs and cartoons about our Felix's namesake, "Felix the Wonderful, Wonderful Cat," going back to the silent film era and comic strip.)

One possible epitaph comes from Marie G. Rudden, who has an office downtown. Last October, Marie wrote on Facebook, "Another aspect of small town life that I love: Felix, our West Stockbridge 'town cat,' has trained many store and small business owners to welcome him into their offices, stores etc., with food, warmth and affection. He makes the rounds, choosing who will take care of him on any particular day. My lucky day today."

Photo above courtesy of Joe Roy, Jr.

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The *Local Yokel* is published monthly. Please send submissions to: the *Local Yokel*, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266 or info@thelocalyokel.org. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the publication. Editors: John Parker, 298-1052, john.parker49@verizon.net; Vicki Grayson, 232-6131, vicki.grayson@rocketmail.com; Susan Fisher, 232-4443, suefish12@gmail.com; Anne Lesser, 232-8577, anne@annelessercommunications.com. Contributor: Doane Perry, 617-547-1413, doaneperry@yahoo.com; Design: Kim Bradway, kim@bloominarts.com.

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Board of Selectmen Meeting Summaries

By Doane Perry

Note: Copies of official board minutes are available at the West Stockbridge Public Library. Video recordings of town meetings are broadcast on Charter Cable channel 190 and on the Internet at <http://vimeo.com/channels/weststockbridge>. Residents can be notified by e-mail of town events and meeting agendas by subscribing at <http://weststockbridgema.virtuالتownhall.net/subscriber>.

Open Meeting: February 27, 2017

Surplus Equipment Bids

The selectmen took under advisement 10 bids received for three items of surplus equipment (a tractor, pickup truck, and van).

Capping the Old Landfill

Bob Salerno, head of the Finance Committee, asked about plans for capping the old landfill on Oak Street. Mark Webber and Curt Wilton said that the Department of Environmental Protection is suggesting options. The estimated cost of the fill is \$35,000. Timing for the capping project is good since Maxymillian is repairing turnpike bridges in the area and might do it for free.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent Curt Wilton declared a snow emergency because the department has a \$6,000 deficit for snow and ice expenditures, having spent the \$80,000 budgeted.

Summer/Winter Population

Mark reported that the seasonal increase in the population of West Stockbridge (1,200 now to an estimated 3,000 in the summer) allows West Stockbridge to have more state liquor licenses in the summer. Crane Lake Camp alone adds 250 with its staffing. Collector June Biggs estimates that 40% of tax bills are mailed out of town.

Regional School Budget

Mark reported on a meeting of the three towns in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. West Stockbridge is enrolling fewer students, and the West Stockbridge share of operating costs has decreased by \$100,000.

Charter Cable Local Programming

Mark reported that the town has received two checks from Charter Cable for local access programming as required by contract and license. One is a onetime capital grant of \$10,000 for public access systems; the other is

an annual payment of \$6,000. The funds will support local programming operations.

Adjourn to Special Town Meeting [reported in the March *Local Yoke*]

Open Meeting: March 6, 2017

Police Department Update

With two full-time and six part-time employees already on the West Stockbridge Police Department, the selectmen accepted Chief Marc Portieri's recommendation to add a ninth person and hired Jacob Singer as a part-time officer. Jacob will start on the midnight to 8 a.m. shift, filling out the roster in line with the budget, to get used to the town and help prepare for sculpture park traffic. Jacob is 25 years old, a Lenox High graduate, has worked for the Lenox and Stockbridge police, and has taken 350 hours of part-time Police Academy training plus some Firefighter Academy training.

The selectmen agreed with Mark Webber's suggestion to consider the chief's recommendation to adopt Plymouth County's parking ticket citation system. Marc said our current ticketing system is based on a town bylaw, and there is no follow-up of unpaid tickets. Marc said the town of Lee uses the Plymouth system, and 90% of tickets are paid there. Marc proposed that Tracy, who does payroll for West Stockbridge and Lee police, serve as parking clerk. Fines should be \$25 with two warnings, with a report made to the Registry of Motor Vehicles on the third warning, and that Tracy and Marc hold parking hearings.

Curt Wilton said that he has heard no negative comments about the Police Department. Curt asked Marc to take a look at early morning 5-6 a.m. traffic. Asked for a list of current personnel, Chief Portieri answered that the list is changing.

Surplus Equipment Bids

Board chair Curt Wilton announced that Troy's Garage was the high

...continued on page 5



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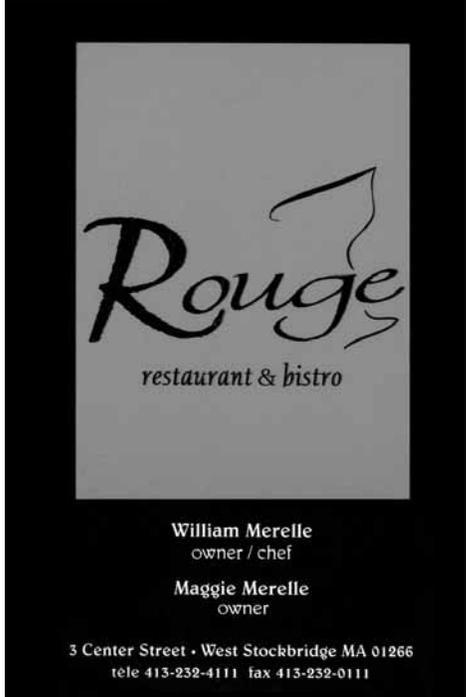
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Planning an Event?

Here's a Tip from the Post Office

Before mailing any type of invitation (wedding, shower, etc.), please bring in a sample. We will weigh it and check the dimensions. This will ensure the invitations have the proper postage and timely delivery!

Colleen A. Wich, Postmaster
4 Center Street
West Stockbridge, MA 01266-9998
Tel.: 232-8544 Fax: 232-7068

Message from Fire Chief Peter Skorput



Burning season is January 15 to April 30. Permits are available at Baldwin Hardware and the Public Market for \$2 and are good for two days. If you have brush to burn, please do it when there is snow cover or the ground is wet to reduce the risk of an out-of-control brush fire.

Also: the Fire Department is looking for new members. If you want to help, please call me or stop at the fire station any Monday night.

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bidder for all three items put up for bid, accepting \$277 for the pickup truck, \$3,077 for the tractor, and \$777 for the van. However, the van's front grill was damaged when hit by a Highway Department snowplow. The selectmen will negotiate a lower price with Troy's Garage or repair it and send it to auction.

Shaker Mill Dam Retaining Wall Repair

Foresight Engineering is designing the repair, which was funded by a warrant approved at the special town meeting and approved by the Conservation Commission. It will go forward as soon as the ice in the pond has gone out, when Maxymillian is ready, and pending any heavy rain that would put the project off. Since the retaining wall (surrounding a storm system pipe) collapsed into the river, the wall footings should still be there.

Parks and Recreation Committee

The selectmen approved plans presented by Roland Dudney. Curt praised and thanked Roland for his work and for the budget breakdown and itemization of expenditures. Noting that the budget is for much the same items and yet lower in amount than last year, Roland said the committee wants to install a black steel fence between the basketball court and the parking lot to protect people from tripping over the parking lot curbing. The fence will cost \$2,745 funded with money saved from having just one lifeguard on duty at Card Pond last summer. Besides water treatment at Card Pond, the committee plans new programs next year including ice skating in the winter and signs advertising sponsors who donate to the recreation area. Roland and the selectmen discussed plans for the playground that include demolition by the town and a 50/50 split of the \$55,000 cost.

FY 2018 Budget

Mark said most town departments have submitted budgets and the selectmen are meeting weekly this month and sometimes during the day. Curt said that this will be his 27th town meeting, noting, "Days go by fast now that I'm 52."

Curt recused himself from the Board of Selectmen to present the Highway Department budget, which he described as the biggest in town. Curt cited a 31-town wage and salary survey by the Highway Association and gave examples of the cost of various highway items.

Curt observed that improving Main Street downtown consumed a lot of money last year. Next year, Curt plans to improve Route 41. Curt has

been highway superintendent for 21 years and is proud that the town's highways are in good shape, but the eight major bridges need repair. Repairs for six of the eight have been paid by the state, but bridges near Denny's garage on Route 41 and at Cone Brook need repair.

Fire Department Studies and Recommendations

Curt thanked Fire Chief Peter Skorput for information about the department roster. Peter said the Fire Department has two new members. Curt emphasized the importance of documentation and reports, especially frequent simple updates rather than long reports. He said progress is all the selectmen ask for, and advised Peter that if he is professional, firm, and pats employees on the back, pride in the Fire Department will come.

Earl, Curt, and Peter discussed the application form and suggested that it include CORI (background) check, pre-employment physical, driver's license copy, references, emergency contacts, and description of the application process. Earl praised the application's question, "Why are you interested?" and said he would like to see completed applications.

Earl, Curt, and Peter discussed the application process. Probation is now six months, and the application process can take a year during which applicants shadow experienced personnel. Peter said applicants are voted into the association, a separate organization that raises money and buys equipment such as smoke detectors. Curt said he would like Fire Department members to be introduced to the Board of Selectmen.

Curt raised the automated dispatch protocol recommended by the independent study. He said discussions with other towns about shared services indicate that the process should start with asking other towns for help and letting them say no if they want. Curt asked Peter to speak with the chiefs of Richmond, Alford, Lenox, Housatonic, and Pittsfield about this.

At their next meeting, the agenda will include a draft application form and immediate response tactics. Peter mentioned there are three recalls on a fire truck requiring it to be left overnight in Albany.

Other Business:

- Mark and Earl discussed Transfer Station staffing while manager Ed McGrath is out on medical leave.
- The annual audit began March 6 and will be completed within the month.

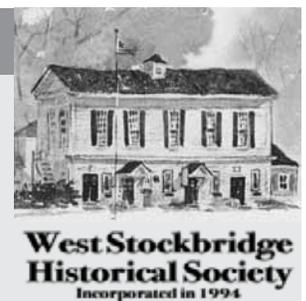
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April History Quiz Question:

West Stockbridge, like many large geographically spread out towns, has a number of neighborhoods, or "hamlets" (defined as a "small human settlement"). One of our most interesting areas is State Line, currently a "drive-by" on your way from town to the Mass Pike and Albany, or something to pass by to get gas at the stations on Route 22. There are a few houses, a small commercial establishment, and the railroad crossing, somewhat isolated and rural.

It wasn't always that way. The turn-of-the-century photo of the State Line Railroad station shows a building as large and significant as the station in the town center. Why would the railroad build a large passenger structure in what is now a rural area? Railroads were not known for spending lavishly, so what justified a formal structure? What was the State Line hamlet like in the early 1900s?

(Find the answer somewhere in this issue!)



Help with Photo ID Needed for "Blast from the Past" Bicentennial Program

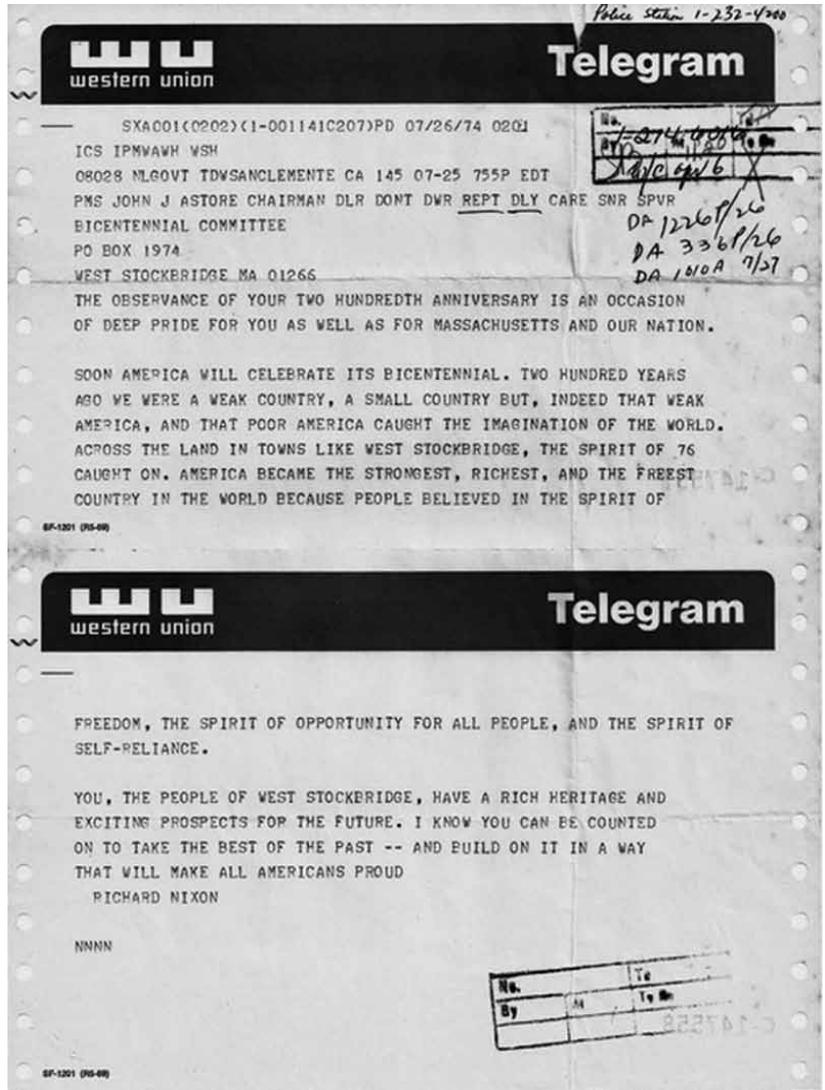
By Jill Pixley

The West Stockbridge Historical Society needs your assistance with identifying as many people as possible who are in the film of the 1974 Bicentennial Ball and Parade that was shown at the Historical Society's program in August last year.

Thanks to a few of our residents, we have some of the names, but not all, because the film was fast paced, and there was not enough time to scan the crowds. However, we have now been able to make prints from the film and have assembled a picture album that will be on display at the West Stockbridge Library for the next few weeks. We encourage residents to visit the library during regular library hours to see if you can add new names to our list.

We have also made a very limited number of DVDs of the original film that we are offering for sale at \$10 each. The copies, like the original film even with its imperfections, are well worth owning just to see and hear the enthusiastic attendees enjoying two very special events in West Stockbridge history. If you are interested in purchasing one of these copies, call 232-4347.

Here's a copy of the telegram sent by President Richard Nixon congratulating West Stockbridge on its 200th anniversary. In a quote from the telegram, "You, the people of West Stockbridge have a rich heritage and exciting prospects for the future. I know you can be counted on to take the best of the past—and build on it in a way that will make all Americans proud."



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Open Meeting: March 13, 2017

FY 2018 Budget And Warrant

Preparing for the town meeting on May 1, Mark Webber and the selectmen discussed 2017–18 year-to-year budget changes. At 5.23% the town's debt-to-budget ratio is less than the state's, which is 7.14%. The town has \$376,000 in free cash, which is healthy, higher than in recent years, and goes into the stabilization fund.

Overall, the budget is tight due to an active year. The town has to buy new software for the collector since the state is not paying for it any longer. The selectmen discussed whether two or three shifts is appropriate for police coverage. The town's cost for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District is down this year after rising two years ago. Transfer Station tonnage is way up this year; Earl suggested that some light loads were taken out. There were questions on the library budget, and bundling insurance plans was discussed.

Issues to resolve include disposing of the Wambach property, repairing roofs on the vault and storage buildings at the cemetery, and repairing the roof on the wastewater treatment plant. The selectmen also need to decide on the future of the parking lot between the Card Lake apartments and the 1854 Town Hall. The lot has been appraised at under \$150,000. New zoning rules make it less nonconforming and raise the issue of whether its best use is parking or a building.

Shared Services Report

Earl Moffatt reported on discussions with representatives of the town of Richmond about shared services that could save both towns money by reducing the cost of operations. Earl and Mark Webber met with Richmond selectman Roger Mazzolini and administrator Mark Pruhenski at the initial meeting. Options considered include sewer system staffing, town government staffing, fire and ambulance, Council on Aging, and solid waste.

First on the list for Richmond is their sewer system. The Richmond Pond community pumps sewage to Pittsfield for treatment through the same line that serves Interprint. One cost-sharing idea is to cross-train one person to assist in case either town has a staffing vacancy.

The second cost-saving option discussed was town government staffing. Richmond has an appointed secretary and clerk. The secretary is out on medical leave and may not return. Earl said West Stockbridge is looking at reorganizing town government duties in the future. Both towns have similar administrative roles, and both communicate with the state and other entities in a similar manner.

The third option discussed was fire and ambulance services. The Richmond fire chief is in charge of both fire and ambulance services, but the ambulance is a separate operation. Both Richmond and West Stockbridge have response time issues. Richmond needs a new ambulance and has money to pay for it. Both fire departments already work together, but both have issues that collaboration could help.

The fourth option discussed was the Council on Aging. Richmond's Council on Aging is very active with 12 people involved. Both councils have similar agendas, and their workloads are expected to go up in the future. Shared services would enable them to offer enhanced services and special trips.

The last topic was solid waste disposal. Richmond pays a hefty sum for curbside pickup one day per week. Residents have to bring trash to the curb, and trash gets strewn around. Metals and mattresses are infrequently recycled. Earl said the West Stockbridge system has the capacity to accept waste from Richmond and could offer access three days a week.

The full boards of the two towns will meet again after their respective town meetings. Meanwhile, Mark will flesh out the options. Curt commented

that the interest in shared services is a big opportunity and would benefit both towns. He cautioned that there have been problems in the past with pride in their own service getting in the way of collaborating with other towns. West Stockbridge already shares town administrative services because Mark works for the town of Cheshire one day a week and was asked by Stockbridge to help with a project. Mark commented that "Good things happen naturally." Curt thanked Earl and Mark for their work.

Fire Department Recommendations Continued

Curt and Earl detailed what information they would like to see included in the Fire Department application process. Peter explained that his decision to appoint members is based on ability, experience, and ability to relate to people, and that a firefighter's ability to stay calm is critical.

Earl asked Peter to explain the difference between the Fire Department and the Rescue Association. Peter said that Fire Department members can join the Rescue Association, a social organization whose finances are separate from the town. Regarding training, Peter said the department trains continually as best it can. There is a required basic firefighter course and focus on search and rescue and hoses.

Curt advised Peter to tell applicants that the Fire Department is a big commitment, to use "tough love," to make demands, praise the department, and stage events to gain visibility such as competitions among teams. The selectmen want documents in order; training records; and monthly reports covering officers, recruits, goals, and hydrants.

The selectmen and Chief Skorput also discussed the response on a recent evening when there was a chimney fire at the same time as a car accident with an injury in order to develop strategies for getting responders to sites when not enough people are available.

Open Meeting: March 20, 2017

Public Road Petition

Mark Sokol of Design Group discussed a homeowner's petition for the town to accept Silvermine Lane, a private road in a subdivision, as a public road.

Fire Department Recommendations Continued

Curt Wilton, Earl Moffatt, and Chief Peter Skorput discussed Fire Department training and record keeping. The selectmen believe that with better records there would be fewer questions about department operations. Curt reviewed many of the 30 to 40 file folders that Peter brought with him. The first one was that of George Allen, who has served on the Fire Department for 45 years and was present at the meeting.

George urged the selectmen to come to a fire call and watch Peter in action saying, "Peter is great in that situation, and he knows how to use people to fight a fire." Curt summed up by saying that Peter is great in loyalty and responsiveness but poor in records and training. He needs to show desire and leadership. Curt and Earl said they were satisfied with the records that Peter brought to the meeting, and they plan to discuss fire hydrants at the next meeting.

FY 2018 Budget and Town Meeting

Mark Webber led the selectmen through a discussion of warrant items on the town meeting agenda. Mark described the Police Department budget as a "whopper," a 28% (\$75,000) increase year to year for three full shifts, staffed around the clock, year round, plus a new cruiser for the additional officers. Mark gave a quick history of the Police Department staffing. Curt said he loves the chief's intentions but advises him to "get his feet wet" first with a slight increase and go through four seasons including James Taylor, camp, and the Turn Park. Mark predicted the department will barely make budget this year and said there is no need for an overnight shift. Curt said new hires will be full-time officers, not part time. □

Community News & Events

Stockbridge Grange Dinner

On Sunday, April 9, the Stockbridge Grange will hold a roast pork dinner in the Grange Hall at 51 Church Street from 1 to 2 p.m. Cost for adults is \$12; \$6 for children under 12. Takeout is available; call (413) 298-3185.

Council on Aging Luncheon

The Council on Aging Potluck will be held in the Community Room at the Town Offices at noon on Tuesday, April 11. The weather should be getting better, so why not come and join us? We all hope to see you there.

West Stockbridge Congregational Church

The West Stockbridge Congregational Church will hold an Easter sunrise service on April 16 at its outdoor chapel at 141 West Center Road beginning at 6:30 a.m. At 7:30, the church will host a free community breakfast downstairs in its social hall, 45 Main Street. Easter service at the church will begin at 10 a.m. Special Easter goodies will be available for children following the service.

Send your notices for Community News & Events to the Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266, or by e-mail to info@thelocalyokel.org.

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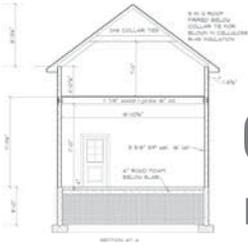


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On the Home Front

By Thom Lipiczky

How the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973–74 Changed Everything About the Way We Build Houses

Back in the “good old days” (pre-1973), houses in New England were generally built much the way they had been built since the 1920s: wood-framed structures with plywood sheathing, single-pane windows, and perhaps rock-wool or fiberglass insulation. Drafty houses were not too much of an issue when petroleum used to produce heating oil cost about \$1.75 a barrel. At those prices, we could just turn up the heat.

In 1973 the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, imposed an embargo on oil exports to the United States in retaliation for American support of the Israeli military. The effect for drivers was long lines at the pumps, and for those who heated with oil or propane, it meant much higher heating bills. The cost of crude went up to over \$10 a barrel by 1974, and in 2012, it was almost \$110 a barrel! All of a sudden, energy efficiency became important to home builders. Improvements in insulation and window design quickly followed.

But those changes created their own set of problems, challenges we all face in our houses today, no matter when they were built. Here’s what happens:

- Increased insulation in the walls and roof holds the warmer moist air inside.
- But with the minimal amount of insulation applied, there is still outside cold air moving into the wall and roof cavities; when cold air meets warm moist air, we get condensation.
- Condensation on the inside face of the insulation invites mold on inner wall surfaces and rot on the framing and sheathing. As the insulation gets damp, it compresses and loses its ability to impede warm air movement, and sets up more room for convection currents in the walls.
- Then, as the outside temperature goes up, that trapped moisture tries to move to the outside of the walls, fostering rot inside the wall cavity and making the paint on the clapboards blister and peel off.

Clearly, some new way to think about how a house works was needed. Enter the field of *building science*. Before this, architects and engineers were mainly interested in structural issues—how to keep the building from falling down. Now, added to these concerns were issues of moisture and vapor movement, temperature gradients, thermal bridging, and dew points.

In the past 15 years, building science has fostered some major advances in rethinking insulation and air/moisture movement in a house envelope. Many of these changes are now part of the Mass Building Code (which includes energy efficiency). For instance, *air sealing* is now an important part of making a house tight and comfortable—and thus lowering the need to turn up the thermostat. And new codes now require higher R-values that measure the rate of heat transfer. Windows, too, now need to slow heat loss with higher U-values. These considerations—and others such as furnace efficiency—are combined to make an energy efficiency score called HERS (Home Energy Rating System).

Houses built before the oil embargo were considered to have a HERS of 100. A *new* house built in most Berkshire towns today would require a rating of 55. That is, the house has to be almost twice as efficient as an older home. The increase in cost (more insulation and air sealing, better windows and doors, more efficient heating/cooling systems, etc.) is partially offset by the lower energy cost to keep the house comfortable in all seasons. And as energy costs increase—as is likely the case when political instability and climate change is factored in—the lower the HERS, the better.

In future columns, I’ll talk about the impact of some of these changes and make some recommendations about upgrading the energy efficiency where you live. I’m also eager to answer questions from you. You can e-mail them to info@thelocalyokel.org.



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TUESDAY 10am-5pm | WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY 2-6pm | SATURDAY 10am-2pm

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Kudos to the Friends of the Library: After sorting unsold donations from last year's book sale, the FOL donated the remaining items to several terrific local charities including the Salvation Army, BFAIR, the Berkshire Dream Center, the Berkshire County House of Correction, the Christian Center, the Elizabeth Freeman Center, and Grass Roots Givers. Our Friends, staff, and trustees are very happy to pass along these books to be read and enjoyed a few more times.

Important notice: Library computers are reserved from 2:30 to 4:30 on Wednesday, April 5 and 12, for a beginners' computer class offered by tech teacher Bill Biggs. This class is full, but please contact the library about upcoming sessions.



A reminder that we'll be showcasing our LEGO Challenge as well as a variety of board games during school spring vacation week.

NEW DVDs

Arrival, Allied, Billy Lynn's Long Half-Time Walk, Loving, Hacksaw Ride, Manchester by the Sea, Moonlight

NEW ADULT FICTION

Baldacci, *The Fix*
Box, *Vicious Circle*
Perry, *Murder on the Serpentine*
Strout, *Anything Is Possible*
Woods, *Fast and Loose*

NEW NONFICTION

Powers, *No One Cares About Crazy People: The Chaos and Heartbreak of Mental Health in America*
Shaw, *The Reporter Who Knew Too Much: The Mysterious Death of What's My Line TV Star and Media Icon Dorothy Kilgallen*

Just For Kids

Fajardo, *Kid Beowulf: Song of Roland*
Weeks, *Glamourpuss*

Ongoing

- Set up a CW/MARS online account by going to weststockbridgelibrary.org and clicking on the card catalog picture. Your personal account allows you to keep track of checkouts, requests, overdues and fees, pickup locations, renewals, and more. Can't find it in our C/WMARS network? Click on the Commonwealth Catalog to borrow any item statewide.
- If you use an e-reader, explore the new statewide Commonwealth e-book Collections (CEC) at eBooks.masslibsystem.org.
- Library Trustees Board meetings take place on the third Tuesdays of the month. All are open to the public. Next meeting is April 18, 4:30, in the Community Room.
- A reminder that day passes to our year-round attractions are available at the library. Thanks to the Friends of the Library and the West Stockbridge Cultural Council for their support.

As always, we welcome suggestions on just about anything to improve our library.

Lee Appelbaum and Jodi Magner

Almost Here!



It's the Year of the Rooster, and things are shaping up well at the market—get ready to crow!

Every month an interesting and informative special market is planned:

- May 18: Kids' Carnival & Opening Day Celebrations
- June 15: Health & Fitness for the Whole Family
- July 6: Kids' Day
- August 3: Wild Wild West Stockbridge
- September 7: Everything Apple
- October 5: The Spooktacular

And new vendors will be joining your favorites. Get ready to welcome Snow Farm with some bedding plants, vegetables and flowers, and skeins of wool; Township Valley Farm with mushrooms; and Cooperstown Cheese.

Stay tuned for more kid-friendly and community events. There's always something for everyone.

Don't miss it!



Farmers Market Committee members Sarah Thorne, Mary Thibeault, and Robin Schmitt prep for the Vendor Appreciation Party on March 16 at 31 Stockbridge Road.



Our own Renaissance man, Tony Carlotto, joins market favorites Eric Reinhardt and Francine Ciccarelli for an impromptu music session as Roland Dudney, Caroline Cook, Morgan Rehm-Brandt, and Mary Thibeault look on.



Appetizers to begin the evening at the Vendor Appreciation Party.

All photos by Peter Cohen.

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April Art Calendar

Narrative Figure Painting: Sat., April 1, 8, 22, 10–1 p.m.; \$20 for model. Pittsfield. ach022050@gmail.com

Art Demonstration and Business Meeting: Wed., April 5; 4:00–4:45 p.m.: Using Instagram. Bring new work for Shaker Mill Inn exhibit; 4:45–5:30: Lynn Horvath on Paper Grounds for Painting; 5:30–6:30: Business meeting. West Stockbridge Town Offices, Community Room, 21 Stateline Road

Life Painting/Drawing Sessions: Tuesdays, sessions for beginners to experts with a live model. \$15

First Fridays Artwalk: Fri., April 7, 5–8 p.m., Pittsfield

Plein Air: Paint, Sketch, or Photograph: 9:30–1 p.m. Lunch and positive critique at end of each session. Check Facebook page: Berkshires Plein Air at 8 a.m.

iPad Painting: Practice with Anne Auberjonois: Wed., April 12 and 26, 10–1 p.m. Bring lunch. Stockbridge

Artist-to-Artist Open Studio: Wed., April 12, 6–9 p.m. WS Community Room. Bring *raw* eggs for Pysanky Ukrainian decorated eggs. Limited to 20 only.

Potluck and Tea with the Masters: See rwsag.org

Positive Critique: Thurs., April 13, 4–6 p.m. Bring 2-3 pieces of your art. WS Town Offices, 21 Stateline Road

Photo Gathering: Sun., April 23, 3–5 p.m. Stanmeyer Gallery, WS. Bring 3–5 photos or on USB or iPhone. www.berkshirephotogathering.com

Meet the Artist: Karen Dolmanisth: Thurs., April 27, 12:15–1:30 p.m. Six Depot, West Stockbridge

Art Book Gathering: April 28, 3–5 p.m. Share a favorite book: artist, process. Shaker Dam Books, WS

Berkshire Humane Society Exhibit: Grand Opening Fri., April 28, 5:30–8 p.m. 214 Barker Rd., Pittsfield.

Richmond-West Stockbridge Artists' Guild
RSVP: rwsag.org "Our Programs." See Facebook

Recent Works



Carol Kelly



Gabrielle K. Murphy



Keith Emerling



Michael Fabrizio



Lou Coco



Doane Perry

“Monument Girls Write On”

Young Women to Read Original Work

at 1854 Town Hall May 12



If you have been fortunate enough to attend this event in the past, when it has been offered under the auspices of the Berkshire Festival of Women Writers, you know there are some fabulous young female writers at Monument Mountain Regional High School. This year, as last, “Monument Girls Write On” will be hosted by the West Stockbridge Historical Society at the 1854 Town Hall on Friday, May 12, at 6 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Hosted by Lisken Van Pelt Dus and other faculty from Monument Mountain Regional High School, this celebratory reading will feature about a dozen students from the school, ages 14 to 18, presenting selections from their poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and hybrid work. Students are chosen to participate by MMRHS English Department faculty, who will also introduce the writers.

This will be the fifth year of this event. It has become a cherished honor for students to be selected and a valued treat for audiences year after year. Please join us for what is sure to be a varied and impressive offering of entertaining, stimulating, and moving work.

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Solar Array Screening at Turnpike Exit: Can the Appearance Be Improved?

By Doane Perry

Some residents have expressed unhappiness about the lack of screening around the new solar array alongside Exit 1 of the Mass Turnpike. Although most of the arrays along the turnpike are unscreened, Mark Webber observed that the array in West Stockbridge is the only unscreened array in a neighborhood. The selectmen agree that the lack of screening of the Exit 1 Turnpike array is inappropriate given its location.

West Stockbridge receives a Payment in Lieu of Taxes from Ameresco, the operator of the installation. Discussions have taken place regarding screening. Here is how Francisca Heming, MassDOT District 1 Highway director based in Lenox, responded by letter to State Representative Smitty Pignatelli:

I spoke with the project manager and I confirmed that there were no vegetative screening requirements that resulted from either our internal review/canvass process or when we held informational meetings with local residents and the board of selectmen. The Power Purchase Agreement [PPA] with Ameresco is based on the total site construction and utility connection costs that were established based on comments received during those two processes.

Moving forward, there will be some site work that continues in the spring to improve the appearance, panel adjustments, and some minor grading. Ameresco is required to restore the surrounding grounds, which will include some loam and seeding and annual mowing. I suggest we wait until May or June to revisit once some of the restoration has taken hold and meet with the concerned abutters and discuss options for fall planting. By then the abutters will have gotten used to the landscape and more green should be in place.

On the downside, vegetative screening that would provide any degree of visual obstruction for residents would likely cause shading of the panels. Impacting insolation would lead to restructuring the PPA based on the system's resulting lowered production. Low shrubs or plantings below the panels will require maintenance and trimmings. Would the town or abutters be willing to participate either in plantings or maintenance through a permitting process? We can probably look into giving the town a permit for placing and maintaining some low plantings.

Let's continue to work on this. I didn't want you to think I forgot about it. Feel free to call if you have any questions.

Curt Wilton suggested that the town's permit terms for the Truck Stop solar array on Route 102 could serve as a precedent or provide parameters for the Turnpike Exit 1 Ameresco array.



Turnpike interchange solar array. Photo by John Parker.

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Poet's Corner

Do you live or work in West Stockbridge and love poetry? Karen Carmean and Mary Howard will be considering original poems for publication in our new feature, the Poet's Corner. If you know other poets, please pass the word along. Poetry can offer a sense of wonder, joy, surprise, and a new way of looking at the world. All topics and styles by West Stockbridge poets are welcome! Please send submissions to info@thelocalyokel.org.

Spring – Sort Of

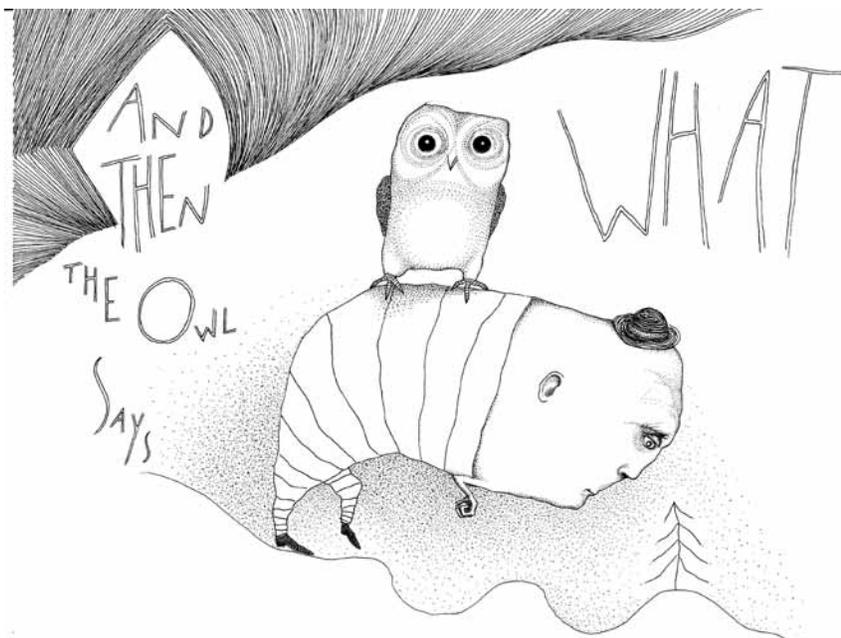
Four feet of snow on the right
two feet on the left,
emerging from below, in the middle:
mud.

We walk,
dodging shards of ice,
one foot balanced on each side
of the sliver walkway,
attempting to reach the garage
and the safety of our car.

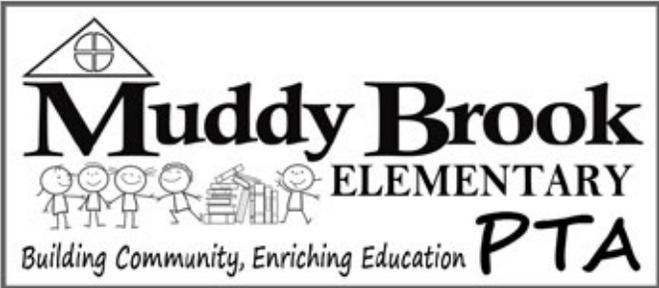
If I were a robin perched in a tree
I would say,
what odd animals
these humans are.

Mary M. Howard

Owl



A visual poem by Linda Cimini-Baker



Mud Day News!

Mud Day will take place on Saturday, May 20, from 12 to 4 p.m., and the theme this year is conservation. We are asking for local organizations to participate. Does your business have a creative way to teach children about conservation? Mud Day is open to the public, not just Muddy Brook families. This will be our seventh annual Mud Day. Please contact Randi Craft, randicraft1711@gmail.com, if you would like to participate.

Rewards for Muddy Brook

Clip and save Box Tops Coupons from more than 330 participating products including Avery, Cheerios, Cascadian Farms, Betty Crocker, Juicy Juice, Hefty, Kleenex, Ziploc, and more. Each coupon is worth 10 cents when redeemed. Mail Box Tops to Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School PTA, 318 Monument Valley Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Show Your School Spirit!

April's theme is POEMS. April is National Poetry Month and the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, students, teachers, librarians, booksellers, and, of course, poets marking poetry's important place in our lives. On Poem in Your Pocket Day, people celebrate by selecting a poem, carrying it with them, and sharing it with others throughout the day. Every Friday in April is Poem in Your Pocket Day at Muddy Brook.

Special Olympics

Save the date! The Special Olympics will be at Monument Mountain Regional High School on Wednesday, May 3. Come support all the Muddy Brook Special Olympians as they go gold!

Visit our website, www.muddybrookpta.com, for more information on upcoming events, and remember to like us on Facebook!

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“Many thanks to our New contributors who have responded with articles, photos, poems, and artwork. You’ll see some in these pages and more in future issues. Please think about how you could contribute!”

This Space Could Have *Your* Byline!

Yes, the *Local Yokel* is looking for local content. We invite residents, businesspeople, and creative folks of all ages to submit material of interest to our readers for consideration. Submissions can include articles, columns, profiles, photos, artwork, poems—you name it! You don’t have to be a pro, just have something to share. Our editors will help you prepare your content for publication.



“Spring Is Coming” Photo Contest

As a special incentive, we invite you to submit photos on the theme of “Spring Is Coming.” As judged by our editors, the best photos will be published in upcoming issues of the *Local Yokel*, and we are offering a **grand prize of \$25 for any photo selected for the cover!** Photos may be in color or black and white, must be submitted as a digital file, and must be taken in West Stockbridge (we’ll need you to tell us the date and location the photo was taken). The contest will run from now until May 15. Depending on how many are submitted, photos may be published in the April, May, or June issues. Deadline for each issue is the 15th of the preceding month.

For more information and submissions, please contact *Local Yokel* editor John Parker at john.parker49@verizon.net or by phone at (413) 298-1052.

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Please send your Birthdays & Anniversaries to the Local Yokel.

We are happy to include them in the next issue.

The Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266 or by e-mail to info@thelocalyokel.org



West Stockbridge History Quiz Answer:

State Line was the railroad interchange for the Western Railroad (later Boston & Albany) running east west, and the New York, New Haven, & Hartford branch line coming up from Connecticut. By 1917 the freight traffic had grown such that a railroad yard, turntable, and engine house were in place east of the railroad crossing. The control tower and storage house, and the station in the photograph had been constructed earlier.

Through the late 1800s and the early 1900s, State Line was a thriving small community. It had a hotel, social and civic club, chapel, two schools, a debating society, post office, brewery, and telephone exchange.

According to the U.S. censuses from 1880 through 1920, the State Line area population numbered over 150 residents, or about 10% of the town's total population. The counts don't include the workers and farmers from Canaan and Austerlitz areas who came to State Line for the schools and to work in the area.

State Line started as a farming community. Open flat land with water power from Flat Brook and easy access into New York and the Hudson River all made it an attractive place to settle. Then iron and limestone mining from the two major quarries created the need for the first railroad line in Western Mass to Hudson. This drew the Irish immigrants who settled in the area. They worked in iron mining until the quarries became too expensive to operate. Many of the Irish stayed to work on the railroad, and according to the 1900 census, over 80% of the State Line residents were foreign born or children of immigrants.

The State Line railroad station served as a major transfer point for people heading to Albany or Pittsfield (remember the roads were only packed dirt or mud). It likely saw more traffic than the main station in the village center because it served both north-south and east-west travelers. The railroad needed the full-size station.

The dapper crew in this early photo is likely the NY, NH, & Hartford R.R. stationmaster and work crew that maintained the tracks to Housatonic. Passenger service ended by the 1950s, and in 1965 the rails to West Stockbridge were taken up.



State Line train station. Photo courtesy of Bob Salerno.

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The West Stockbridge Historical Society presents:



Spring Birds and Wildflowers

Friday April 7th - 6:30 PM
1854 Town Hall, Main Street
West Stockbridge

Spring is an amazing time of year! The land is finally awakening from its winter slumber and everyone is eager to get outside. Red-winged blackbirds are calling in the wetlands, bluebirds are scooping out new digs to raise a family, and the bobolinks are returning from Argentina. In the forest, little bits of yellow and purple unfurl to greet the sunshine. There are signs of new life all over.

Rene Wendell, an experienced naturalist and former property manager of Bartholomew's Cobble, will share some of the wonderful secrets of our birds and spring wildflowers. He is currently monitoring over 3,000 acres in Berkshire County for the Nature Conservancy and will share some of his experiences in the field and tell everyone the best places to see the flowers and the birds.

This one you won't want to miss!

Program is free and open to the public. Donations Appreciated.
A reception will follow the talk.



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Birthdays & Anniversaries

4/22 Anne Mikolajczyk

4/27 Ru Epstein-Santoyo
(first birthday!)

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? To be sure your listing gets in the *Local Yokel*, please send it in by the 15th of the month before the desired issue each year.

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Board of Health	<i>John Olander</i>	232-0300	ext. 314	Fri. 9 a.m.–4 p.m., or by appt.
Board of Selectmen	<i>Earl B. Moffatt, Peter Skorput, Curt G. Wilton</i>			
Administrative Assistant	<i>Mark Webber</i>	232-0300	ext. 319	Mon., Wed., Thurs., Fri. 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
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Sewer & Water Commission	<i>Michael Buffoni</i>	232-0309		
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Town Treasurer	<i>Karen Williams</i>	232-0300	ext. 316	Thurs. 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Transfer Station	<i>Edward McGrath</i>	232-0307		Tues. & Thurs. 10 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sat. 8 a.m.–6 p.m.
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Veterans Agency	<i>Laurie Hills</i>	528-1580		
Zoning Board of Appeals	<i>C. Randolph Thunfors</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	

Official Town Government Website: weststockbridge-ma.gov • Community and Business Website: weststockbridgetown.com

**THE WEST STOCKBRIDGE
CHAMBER PLAYERS**

Spring Concert

Friday, May 26, 2017 at 6:00 PM

1854 Town Hall, Main Street, West Stockbridge

Oliver Aldort, cello • Edwin Barker, double bass
Sheila Fiekowsky, violin • Daniel Getz, viola
John Holland, violin • Catherine Hudgins, clarinet
Linda Toote, flute

Jennifer Higdon: Soliloquy for Clarinet and String Quartet

Samuel Barber: String Quartet, Op. 11

Antonín Dvořák: Terzetto in C major, Op. 74

Jerod Impichchaaha' Tate:

Toklo (Two) for American Indian Flute and Clarinet

Oswaldo Golijov: Lullaby and Doina

TICKETS \$35 Available April 28*

PURCHASE ADVANCE TICKETS ONLINE

www.weststockbridgehistory.org

Or call 413-232-5055

**...or look for the "Blue Note"
in downtown business windows...**

*Residents of West Stockbridge under 18
are free with a reservation.

*A reception
will follow
the concert!*

Sponsored by
a grant from the
West Stockbridge
and Richmond
Cultural Councils.



THIS PROGRAM IS A BENEFIT
PERFORMANCE FOR THE WEST STOCKBRIDGE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

West Stockbridge
Local Yokel
 P.O. Box 238
 West Stockbridge, MA
 01266

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

**The Local Yokel
Needs You!**

Would you enjoy being part of the team that produces this free monthly newsletter serving our community, now in its 10th year of publication?

Call John Parker at (413) 298-1052 or e-mail info@thelocalyokel.org

April 2017 Calendar of Events

4/3	Planning Board meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/3	Board of Selectmen meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/5	Knitters & More	2-4 p.m.	Town Offices Community Room
4/6	Board of Health	6:30 p.m.	Town Offices
4/7	Spring Birds & Wildflowers	6:30 p.m.	1854 Town Hall
4/9	Palm Sunday		
4/9	Grange Dinner	1-2 p.m.	Grange Hall, 51 Church St., Stockbridge
4/10	Passover (begins at sundown)		
4/10	Board of Selectmen meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/11	COA Potluck Luncheon	12 noon	Town Offices Community Room
4/11	American Legion	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/12	Knitters & More	2-4 p.m.	Town Offices Community Room
4/14	Good Friday		
4/15	*** Deadline for the next Local Yokel ***		send to info@thelocalyokel.org
4/16	Easter		
4/16	Easter Sunrise Service	6:30 a.m.	Outdoor Chapel at 141 West Center Road
4/17	Board of Selectmen meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/18	Library Trustees meeting	4:30 p.m.	Town Offices Community Room
4/19	Knitters & More	2-4 p.m.	Town Offices Community Room
4/22	Earth Day		
4/24	Planning Board meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/24	Board of Selectmen meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices
4/26	Knitters & More	2-4 p.m.	Town Offices Community Room
	Board of Selectmen meeting	7 p.m.	Town Offices