

# Local yokel

*(n.) a country folk living in a quaint neighborhood community*

West  
Stockbridge  
**December**  
2024

S E R V I N G   O U R   C O M M U N I T Y   S I N C E   2 0 0 5



***Happy Holidays!***

***Special Town Meeting Wednesday, Dec. 11, 6 pm. at the Town Offices***

*Frosted flowers. Photo by Emily Weiland*



# Insights on the Beautification of West Stockbridge

By Lisa Parker



As I reflect on lessons learned after designing, planting, and maintaining the plantings in town for the past 20 years, I've concluded it's all about "embracing the art of managing what we can't control." It is very labor intensive keeping everything alive in the heat of the summer and other unexpected conditions. In the summer of 2023, it rained for the entire month of July. This year, we had weeks of drought with heat that continued until early October. That makes this a 7-day/week job. Plants need to be watered and monitored daily when it's hot and dry or the soil becomes so devoid of moisture that the water just runs through without being absorbed. The sun was so intensely hot that the sweet potato vines on the bridges and the South African succulents burned up again this year. By mid-August, the sweet potatoes began heaving out of the soil, ready to be harvested more than a month earlier than usual.

It is a constant challenge to find new innovative ways to keep moisture in the soil, so I'm always working on finding solutions. Also, when it is persistently hot, there is an increase in pest management. With the lack of rain, insects begin sucking the moisture out of the plants, adding yet another layer of labor, management, and oversight. Being respectful of my limited fiscal budget, I use plant material that is drought tolerant and choose colors that will naturally transition into the Fall season to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Then there is the challenge of trailer trucks running through the garden bed at the intersection of Routes 102 and 41. Three-quarters of that bed was destroyed in mid-July as a truck drove over the whole thing. Six large garbage bags of plant material had to be removed and replaced. It is not only an additional expense but a challenge to find replacement plant material at that time of the year. Again, it adds to more labor and oversight because the new plant material has to be watered more often to get reestablished during the hottest part of the summer.

This is not my full-time job. I often water either before or after working all day for the towns of West Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Egremont, along with managing several private properties and a sculpture park in Hudson. I am grateful for all the positive comments I receive when I am out doing my daily rounds. Thanks also to Sarah Thorne for watering the upper Old Town Hall planters and Josh Lesser for keeping all the new plantings alive while I was on vacation.

Plans are in the works for planting more spring bulbs, additional in-ground plantings (watch for new plantings at the cannon at the corner of State Line Road and Route 41), Christmas lights and container decorations, but more funds are needed. We need a minimum of \$4,000 to \$5,000 to cover upcoming expenses for additional projects. Please remember how the seasonal plantings and decorations add life and beauty to our town throughout the year.

You can make a donation to "West Stockbridge Plants & Gardens" and either drop it off at the Town Offices or mail to Town of West Stockbridge, 21 State Line Road, West Stockbridge, MA 01266. Or use Santa's Wish List in this issue of the *Local Yokel*. Thanks to you all for your generous support!



*Photos courtesy of Lisa Parker*

# Select Board Meeting Minutes

[Editor's note: At the town administrator's request, the Select Board minutes here are reprinted verbatim with no editing of text. Official board minutes are available at the West Stockbridge Public Library and on the town website, <https://www.weststockbridge-ma.gov/>. Select Board meetings are on Zoom and may be viewed by clicking on the link in the meeting agenda posted on the town website calendar. Residents can receive email notification of town events and meeting agendas by subscribing at <http://weststockbridgema.virtualtownhall.net/subscriber>].

## Select Board Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2024

**The quorum was present:** Select Board members; Andrew Krouss, Kathleen Kersey, Chair Andrew Potter, and Town Administrator Marie Ryan.

**Others Present:** Town Counsel Jonathan Eichman, Planning Board member Ryan Beattie, Zoning Board of Appeals Member Randy Thunfors, and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Staff Members CJ Hoss and Brett Roberts

Andy Potter opened the meeting at 6:02 PM.

Kathleen made a motion, seconded by Andy Krouss, to approve the September 9, 2024 minutes.

All were in favor, and the minutes were approved.

**Citizen Speak: None**

## Town Administrator Update:

Marie informed the Board that Smitty Pignatelli worked with Mass DOAT to name a portion of Albany Road as the Gene Della Highway. A sign has been installed near the Fire Station. Smitty presented and uncovered the sign on Saturday during a short presentation to Gene for his many years of service as the longest-serving moderator in the Commonwealth.

## Discussion about New State Housing Legislation:

CJ Hoss and Brett Roberts informed the Board that they can help communities find and receive grant money for housing. They can assist with large and small projects to create Requests for Proposals and similar work towards affordable housing in the community. Brett has done much work with South County towns, such as building a housing production plan in Egremont. They stated several programs assist towns and residents with applying for loans to rehabilitate their homes and for communities to begin work on affordable housing. Some grants that the Towns receive can be

...continued on page 5

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# SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR ELIGIBLE SENIORS

## Step 1

At the town meeting on May 6, 2024, the town passed MGL Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 41C1/2, updating the Senior Property Tax Exemption.

## Step 2

At the special town meeting on December 11, 2024, the town will be asked to approve further provisions of Clause 41C1/2.

## Completed Senior Property Tax Exemption

Once the provisions are accepted at the special town meeting on December 11, 2024, the updated Senior Property Tax Exemption will reduce eligible seniors' property taxes by \$1,000. (This \$1,000 property tax reduction is per property and independent of the number of senior residents residing at the property.) These are the eligibility requirements:

- At least one senior owning and residing at the property who is age 65 or older
- That senior must be a resident of Massachusetts for ten years, five of which were as the owner resident of the property being taxed
- Income limit from all sources is not to exceed the Senior Circuit Breaker single income level, an amount determined each year by the Department of Revenue (currently \$69,000). The same income limit applies to all three categories of ownership: single, married, or head of household

We urge West Stockbridge citizens to attend the town meeting on December 11, 2024, and vote YES on the warrant to complete this process. It is the right thing to do for our seniors who are struggling to pay their property taxes (note there is minimal cost to the town, thanks to partial reimbursement from the state).

Thank you,

June Biggs, Louise Faggioni, Frank Landsberger, Jill Pixley, Sheila Thunfors, Rocky Tonini, and Sharon Vidal

*For those who may be eligible, please contact the assessors for further details, applications, and required documentation.*

# Highway Signs Honor Gene Dellea



*Photo by John Parker*

At the Select Board meeting on September 23, Town Administrator Marie Ryan announced that State Representative Smitty Pignatelli worked with the Mass Department of Transportation to name a portion of Albany Road (Route 41) as the Gene Dellea Highway. Two signs have been installed, one near the firehouse and the other further up the road. Smitty presented and uncovered the signs on Saturday during a short presentation to Gene for his many years of service as the longest-serving moderator in the Commonwealth. Thank you, Gene!

## Mill Brook Sugar House

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The *Local Yokel* is published monthly. Please mail submissions to: **The Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266**, email [info@thelocalyokel.org](mailto:info@thelocalyokel.org), or visit [www.thelocalyokel.org](http://www.thelocalyokel.org). Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the publication. Editors: **John Parker, 394-4368, [john.j.parker53@gmail.com](mailto:john.j.parker53@gmail.com); Vicki Grayson, 232-6131, [vicki.grayson@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicki.grayson@rocketmail.com); Susan Fisher, 232-4443, [suefish12@gmail.com](mailto:suefish12@gmail.com); Anne Lesser, 717-0277, [anne@annelesserscommunications.com](mailto:anne@annelesserscommunications.com); Designer: **Kim Bradway, [kim@bloominarts.com](mailto:kim@bloominarts.com)**.**

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given to residents, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) will work directly with the Town and complete all of the administrative duties to get these programs working for them.

Andy Potter asked CJ if the Affordable Housing Trust Committee and the Community Preservation Committee could get together and find a program that could work. Would BRPC be able to guide them through the process and manage it? CJ said not at this time but that they are working on some set that could work for that.

Town Counsel Jonathan Eichman said the Legislature has recently approved a new Affordable Housing Act. The new Act will affect the Towns with an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Bylaw. This Act will change the limit on the size of the units. It will also eliminate the requirement for owner-occupied housing and ensure ADUs are allowed by right based on owner occupancy. He said West Stockbridge currently has this requirement and will have to change it. He mentioned a lot of uncertainty, but the State hopes to draft guidelines by February 2025. The new By Right Provision allows for an ADU to be a detached building, and in some cases, for some lots having more than one building, a special permit may be required due to the lack of requirements for owner-occupied housing. Jonathan suggested that the town adjust the ADU bylaw as soon as possible to match up with the state.

Ryan Beattie, a Planning Board Member, stated that the Board knew these changes were coming and had been working on creating new zoning bylaws to align with the State's. At the Planning Board's meeting the previous evening, they decided to table the ADU bylaw until they can get more clarification and details from the State in the coming months. The town's bylaws will be superseded by the state's until we change them once the details are finalized.

**Discussion on Proposal of Zoning Bylaw Changes by Planning Board: Ryan Beattie**

Ryan stated that the Planning Board requests that the Zoning Bylaws regarding Short-Term Rentals be changed and that the Zoning Board of Appeals membership be increased by one. Changes in the Short-Term Rental bylaw that they would like to see include an

owner occupancy requirement so the owner is an active member of the property and limits on the days allowed to rent the home.

Andy Potter inquired who would be in charge of enforcement, and Ryan responded that it would be the Zoning Enforcement Officer, who would have a fee structure for penalties. Kathleen was concerned that enforcement would be the most challenging portion of this bylaw.

Ryan explained that the owner will need to determine the number of days they want to rent the property, and if it is over the 40-day limit, they will need to have a special permit before renting. Kathleen is concerned places a lot of additional burden on the Town since the Town Administrator, the Building Inspector, and the Fire Chief and the Planning Board will all need to be involved.

Kathleen also mentioned that people had responded with concern that the \$400 initial registration fee for the first three years was perhaps high.

Andy Potter asked for a motion to refer this item back to the Planning Board, seeing none, he tabled the agenda item to be continued to the next meeting on October 7, 2024.

Andy Krouss made a motion, seconded by Kathleen, to close the open session and adjourn into executive session and not to return to open session;

Anticipated executive session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Police Chief).

**Roll Call Vote:**

Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes
Kathleen	Yes

Motion approved, entered into executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marie Y. Ryan*

Marie Y. Ryan  
Town Administrator

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*At its meeting on October 21, the Select Board presented service awards to **Dutch Pinkston** for his many years of service as a volunteer on the Zoning Board of Appeals, **Lisa Parker** for keeping our town so beautiful, and **Curt Wilton, III**, for his outstanding performance and professionalism as a police officer. Photo courtesy of the Town of West Stockbridge.*

~2024~

# West Stockbridge Holiday Market

Saturday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> | 10a-4p



Historical Society, 9 Main St.

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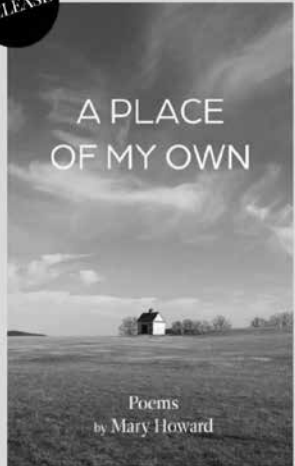
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...continued from page 5

### Select Board Meeting Minutes

October 7, 2024

**The quorum was present:** Select Board members; Andrew Krouss, Kathleen Kersey, and Chair Andrew Potter

**Others Present:** Police Chief Marc Portieri

Andy Potter opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

**Citizen Speak: None**

#### Continued Discussion on Proposal of Zoning Bylaw Changes by Planning Board:

Andy Potter mentioned that this agenda item was tabled at the last meeting due to the lack of a motion to proceed with further discussion or a vote to refer back to the Planning Board to enable them to hold a Public Hearing on these changes.

Andy Potter stated that the approval to refer the zoning changes back to the Planning Board is the process that needs to be taken from the Planning Board to hold a public hearing and then the Select Board to hold a special Town Meeting to pass any bylaw changes. He mentioned that the Select Board will have an opportunity to review any further changes the Planning Board may make after they hold their public hearing before the Select Board votes to hold a Special Town Meeting to approve the bylaw changes.

Kathleen made a motion, seconded by Andy Krouss, to refer the Zoning Bylaw changes back to the Planning Board for a Public Hearing.

All were in favor, motion passed.

#### Appointment of Cameron Sibley as a Part-Time Police Officer: Chief Marc Portieri

Marc informed the Board that Police Officer Nate Sermini left the Department in September to work in Sheffield. He requested the

Board appoint Cameron Sibley as a Part-Time Officer to assist with covering shifts until a new Full-Time Officer has been hired. Cameron is a Full-Time EMT in Lenox currently but worked as a police officer in West Stockbridge from 2016-2018, and he is fully Bridge Academy trained.

Andy Krouss made a motion, seconded by Kathleen, to appoint Cameron Sibley as a Part-Time Police Officer.

All were in favor, motion passed.

Cameron and Chief Portieri thanked the Board.

#### Select Board Speak:

Andy Krouss stated that Dutch Pinkston, a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), has retired after many years of service to the Town. The Board expresses its deepest appreciation for his service.

Andy Potter reminded everyone that a vaccination clinic will be held at Town Hall on October 8th and 17th. He also mentioned that Early Voting will start in the Town Clerk's Office on Saturday, October 19th, and will be available several days and times; further information can be found on the Town website.

Andy Krouss made a motion, seconded by Kathleen, to adjourn.

All were in favor; the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marie Y. Ryan*

Marie Y. Ryan  
Town Administrator

### Select Board Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2024

**The quorum was present:** Select Board members Andrew Krouss, Kathleen Kersey, and Chair Andrew Potter.

**Others Present:** Police Chief Marc Portieri, Police Sgt. Mike Renton and Zoning Board of Appeals Chair Randy Thunfors

Andy Potter opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

**Citizen Speak: None**

#### Town Administrator Update:

Marie informed the Board that the gazebo purchased by the Parks & Recreation Committee is installed behind the Town Hall and should be completed for next week's Halloween party.

She also informed the Board that the Planning Board will hold their public hearing regarding the short-term rental bylaw changes in January 2025. Marie will plan on having a special town meeting on December 11, 2024 for articles that include a change in the tax exemptions for seniors, changing the Town Clerk position to appointed, and an article that will approve a right of way to the aqua fir on the Gaston property. She asked the Board for their approval, and they agreed to proceed with this special town meeting. We will hold another one after the Planning Board completes its public hearing.

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## Winter Parking Ban Begins December 15



The West Stockbridge winter parking ban will be in effect from December 15 to April 1 between 11 pm and 7 am for all town roads. Violation may result in a \$25 fine for parking in a prohibited area, as well as a \$50 fine for impeding snow removal. The vehicle may also be towed at the owner's expense for impeding snow removal.

Municipal parking is located on Hotel Street and Center Street. Snow removal in these areas will take place between 7 and 8 am.

Thank you for your cooperation.  
West Stockbridge Police Department  
(413) 232-8500

# Parks & Rec Update

By Cait Graham



*The new pavilion. Photo by Joe Roy*

The friendly folks of West Stockbridge Parks & Recreation are excited to announce two fantastic additions to the playground and fields behind the Town Offices. Stop by and you'll see we have a big, brand-new, beautiful pavilion situated conveniently near the library and playground. What a great place to read a book, watch your kids play, or stop for a rest after a nice walk around the field! The other addition is further out, along the edge of the soccer field: new benches generously donated by the Kramek family. We hear that local soccer players are already taking advantage of them. We hope that you enjoy these upgrades, and we look forward to more in the future!

SEASON OF LIGHT

A CONCERT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
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- Firewood



...continued from page 7

**Certificates of Civic Appreciation:**

Andy Potter asked Police Chief Marc Portieri and Sgt. Mike Renton to come to the podium to present their award. Chief Portieri stated that Curt Wilton, III, has been an extremely diligent and professional Officer for the Town. Curt's dedication and police work have been without reproach, and the Town is lucky to have him. He then presented Curt with a special plaque that thanked him for his dedication and professionalism.

Andy Potter then asked Zoning Board of Appeals Chair Randy Thunfors to come up to the podium. Randy spoke about the hard decisions the ZBA has to make and how much work it is to be on the ZBA. He said that Dutch Pinkston has been on this Board for several decades, and they truly appreciate all that he has done for the Town through his dedication to the ZBA.

Andy Potter presented Lisa Parker with the final certificate. He praised her commitment to the Town and the talents she uses every day to make it look beautiful. The Board thanked her for her service over the years.

**Police Department Update: Chief Marc Portieri**

Chief Portieri informed the Board that the Department has responded to 3,987 calls so far this year. This number is close to last year's final number, so they have been very busy. These calls include incidents such as motor vehicle stops, accidents, medical calls, and domestic calls. He reminded everyone that Halloween is next week and to please drive carefully and keep an eye out for pedestrians.

The Officers have recently completed firearms training and are continuing with more training throughout the year. The Lexipol program purchased this year has been extremely helpful to the Department in completing its requirement of having a written policy document. The draft has been completed and is being reviewed for final edits. Once this document is complete, the Department will give the Board copies of it.

The Chief stated that the officers would be busy with Halloween and election day, and they would be working with Helping Hands to buy and wrap presents for local children in the next few weeks.

He noted that the Sheriff's Office will be closing its dispatch center in Pittsfield and that the state will be taking over all dispatch cen-

ters. Marc will attend a meeting about this on October 28th to get more information on how the process will work for emergencies and will report back.

The Board Asked about the data that can be pulled from the traffic-calming flashing lights and wondered if it has been helpful in catching people who speed on Route 41. Marc said he would be pulling data again shortly and hopes to use it to pinpoint times that certain cars pass through at a high rate of speed. The officers can then determine when to set up radar in that particular area. He hopes this will encourage drivers to slow down.

**Town Signage:**

Joe Roy, Vision Committee Chair, said that the Committee had to cancel its last meeting, so they did not have time to discuss Town signage yet. He asked the Board if there was anything in particular they would like to see or include before the Vision Committee discussed this item. Kathleen mentioned that she would reach out to Eric Shimelonis, a previous Select Board member who had gathered information and sample lettering for Town signs, and would forward any information to Joe.

**Select Board Speak:**

Andy Krouss noted that when he was in Town this weekend, the bank had run out of money. He assumes that, hopefully, this was good news for the Town because that must have meant there were a lot of people visiting and spending money in Town.

Andy Potter reminded everyone and encouraged them to come and vote and that Early Voting is currently happening in the Town Clerk's Office. He gave the following dates and times to come into early vote: Tuesday, Oct 22 and Thursday, Oct 24 from 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM Saturday, Oct 26 from 9 AM- 11 AM and 3 PM -5 PM Tuesday, Oct 29, and Thursday, Oct 31 from 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Kathleen made a motion, seconded by Andy Krouss, to adjourn.

All were in favor; the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 6:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marie Y. Ryan*

Marie Y. Ryan  
Town Administrator



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## December History Quiz Question:



**West Stockbridge  
Historical Society**  
Incorporated in 1994

Last month, West Stockbridge was the center of the world, or at least the focus of our country for a few days. The Albert family generously donated their beautiful Norway spruce for the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. International press, visitors from all over, various police and emergency departments, and the Baldwin Food Truck gathered at the intersection of Routes 41 and 102 (also known as State Line and Albany Roads). Police estimated more than 700 people watched the cutting of the tree as it was being trucked out for its journey to New York City. This was a significant contribution to West Stockbridge's place in the news, at least for a few weeks.

Coincidentally, the homes at the intersection of the two busiest roads in town are an important and unique part of our town's history. The Alberts' tree adds to it as well. How do the surrounding buildings relate to our history?

(Find the answer somewhere in this issue!)

When friends, neighbors, or relatives move, downsize, or just clean house, *please* ask them to think of the West Stockbridge Historical Society before they discard any old books, pictures, postcards, letters, or memorabilia of the Town of West Stockbridge. Email [info@weststockbridgehistory.org](mailto:info@weststockbridgehistory.org) or call (413) 232-4465.

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See our new Marketplace section featuring a selection of books, craft items and art works by our members. A portion of each purchase will be donated by the synagogue to the Southern Berkshire area People's Pantry.

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# Santa's Wish List

Dear Readers,

It's that time of year again! This is our 17th annual Santa's Wish List appeal. Last year we distributed \$9,945 to support local organizations and agencies that offer important programs and services to our community.



We hope you will donate to one or more of these great organizations: Friends of the West Stockbridge Library, Pet Partners of the Tri-State Berkshires, West Stockbridge Farmers Market, West Stockbridge Fire and Rescue Services, West Stockbridge Historical Society, West Stockbridge Parks & Recreation, West Stockbridge Plants & Gardens, West Stockbridge Zucchini Festival, and, of course, the *Local Yokel*.

These organizations need your help to continue making our town such a special place to live. Your donations are very much appreciated. Gifts of even a few dollars add up and make a real difference.

To donate, use the gift tag at the right, fill out your name and the amount on the reverse side, and mail it with your check or checks to:

WSLY  
P.O. Box 238  
West Stockbridge, MA 01266

**IMPORTANT: Please make your check out as instructed on the back of the gift tag and send it to WSLY at the address above, NOT to the recipient organization.**

Thanks for your support, and we wish you the happiest of holidays!

The WSLY Staff



To: Friends of the  
West Stockbridge  
Library



To: The Local Yokel



To: Pet Partners of the  
Tri-State Berkshires



To: Town of West Stockbridge  
Parks & Recreation



To: Town of West Stockbridge  
Plants & Gardens



To: Town of West Stockbridge  
Zucchini Festival



To: West Stockbridge  
Farmers Market



To: West Stockbridge Fire  
and Rescue Services



To: West Stockbridge  
Historical Society

Friends of the West Stockbridge Library, please accept this gift of  
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From: \_\_\_\_\_  
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*Friends of the  
West Stockbridge  
Library*

The Local Yokel, please accept this gift of  
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*The Local Yokel*

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**(Please make check payable to Pet Partners of the Tri-State Berkshires)**

*Pet Partners of the  
Tri-State Berkshires*

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Parks & Recreation*

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*West Stockbridge  
Historical Society*



# Hometown Tree Makes Good

By John Parker



*The perfect choice.*  
Photo by Deborah Bowen



*Wrapped and ready to go.*  
Photo by Bob Salerno



*MMRHS chorus and Singing Elves.*  
Photo by John Parker



*Santa and Mrs Claus.*  
Photo by John Parker

Hundreds of residents and visitors, some from hours away, gathered to watch as the 74-foot Norway spruce was cut down, loaded on a flatbed truck, carefully wrapped, and sent on its way to New York City to be raised again as the famous Rockefeller Center Christmas tree. The tree was donated by Earl Albert and his family from their home at 8 Albany Road in West Stockbridge. It is the first Rockefeller Center tree to come from Massachusetts since 1959.

The event, televised live on the *Today Show*, drew numerous spectators including families with children, many sporting holiday attire. Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus were on hand, as was Hazel the Rein-Sheep. The MMRHS chorus led by Julie Bickford and West Stockbridge's Singing Elves performed holiday songs, adding cheer to the occasion.

First spotted by Rockefeller Center Head Gardener Erik Pauze on a scouting trip to the Berkshires in 2020, he knew right away it was the perfect selection. When asked if he would consider donating the tree, owner Earl Albert readily agreed. Pauze checked on the tree regularly, and in the spring he and Albert started feeding and watering the 11-ton tree, preparing it for its 140-mile trip and installation in midtown Manhattan.

Lifted upright again by a massive crane and enveloped in scaffolding, the tree will be decorated with miles of wire, 50,000 multicolored lights, and topped with a 9-foot crystal-encrusted Swarovski star weighing 900 pounds. The lighting will be broadcast live on NBC for the "Christmas in Rockefeller Center" special on December 4.

Update: We have learned that Earl Albert, the West Stockbridge homeowner who donated the tree, suffered a stroke shortly after the tree was removed. The latest word as we go into production is that Earl is recovering. Well-wishers are invited to send cards to Earl Albert, P.O. Box 109, West Stockbridge, MA 01266.

*Sources: The Boston Globe, October 30, 2024; The Berkshire Eagle, October 28 and November 14, 2024; The Seattle Times, November 1, 2024*



*We have liftoff.*  
Photo by John Parker



*Loading tree onto flatbed.*  
Photo by Bob Salerno



*On the road.*  
Photo by Bob Salerno



*Tree arrives at Rockefeller Center.*  
Photo by Roger Cavanagh

## PappasBland: Photos That Tell Stories

By Anne Roy and Joe Roy, Jr.

You may have wondered about the beautiful photo on the cover of the November *Local Yokel*, so let us introduce you to its creators, photographers Diana Pappas and Tom Bland, owners of PappasBland.

Diana was living in Hoboken, New Jersey, and Tom in London when they met on Flickr as visual artists with similar interests. Diana said it was a “great way to meet, appreciating each other’s photography.”

Eventually the two met in person, and after coming to visit a friend in Great Barrington, the two fell in love both with each other and with the Berkshires. The rolling hills reminded Tom of England, and they decided the area would be a magical place to live, work, and begin their family. When land became available in West Stockbridge, they built a beautiful new home and studio.

PappasBland produces photography prints of trees, plants, landscapes, lakes, meadows, abstracts, and much more—all in great supply here in the Berkshires—but they also have prints from all over the country and the world. They unveil new artwork in their monthly newsletter, “Writing with Light” ([newsletter.pappasbland.com](mailto:newsletter.pappasbland.com)).

Beyond their artwork, Tom and Diana very much enjoy working with businesses and craftspeople through visual storytelling by “applying their artistic vision to document an artisan or business” as they create or apply their individual tasks and products. They capture images of their clients as they practice the details of their craft, where it happens as it happens. They tell the story brilliantly with pictures.

They have discovered that many people are interested in observing the production of crafts, art, and services with people in their environment as they produce and fulfill their special stock in trade. Their website offers some visuals of their work—for example, through the magic of photography, one particular story at [pappasbland.com/visualstorytelling](http://pappasbland.com/visualstorytelling) features a Canadian maple syrup enterprise. The photos invite the viewer to breathe the crisp, icy forest air, smell the



*Diana Pappas and Tom Bland,  
owners of PappasBland*





smoke from the fire that reduces the sap into syrup, taste the sweetness of the process, and meet the people who make it happen.

PappasBland specializes in portraits of people “in their environment” as opposed to in a studio, although they do both. People who create a product can’t “capture” themselves in their work, so it’s useful to document what they do while they are doing it.

Capturing the environment where the work is being done is both important and often fascinating. It has much to do with the essence of a person’s creativity. Understanding the expertise involved, detailing the final product, and appreciating it is a vital element of the process. Many of their projects show how amazing it is to witness someone else’s work, even when the artist or craftsman may believe it’s unremarkable.

Tom explained that their intent is to reveal the art in what people do. Their photos offer a detailed and insightful perspective into a person’s creativity. The couple look forward to meeting the many local expert craftspeople and professionals who may become subjects of their photography.

Diana and Tom also showed us various work-in-progress pictures of their new home in West Stockbridge during construction. That process inspired them to use some of the construction materials to create new ways to photograph stunning stills of plants in their backyard, as we saw on that November cover mentioned earlier.

PappasBland chose well when they decided to move to West Stockbridge. And our town is indeed fortunate to have a new and vibrant young professional couple join us. Welcome to West Stockbridge, Tom and Diana!

*Photos by PappasBland*



*Jason Pappas with his hand-carved floating sculptures in Jericho, VT.*



*Brita Granström with her paintings on the Northumberland coast in England.*



# News from the Pews



By Ed Byrne, St. Patrick Church

Sweeten your season and spread some holiday cheer with our annual Christmas Cookie Walk! Please join us on Saturday, December 14, from 9 to 11 am at St. Ann's Family Center on Main Street in Lenox. The event, formerly held at St. Patrick Church in West Stockbridge, will benefit the Youth Ministry and the New Genesis Program for individuals of differing abilities. Whether you're craving rich chocolate chips, classic sugar, or festive gingerbread, we will have a delicious assortment to satisfy every sweet tooth. Grab a few for yourself or a bag in bulk to help make this Christmas extra special while giving back to those in need. Thank you—we hope to see you there!

## December Donor Roll Call

Mark & Melissa Greenlaw  
Sally Kimball  
Kathy Korte & Gary Quadrozzi  
Tom Sagendorph

Bob & Mary Thibeault  
Molly & Chris Vreeland  
Anonymous: 2

Thanks to everyone who has donated to WSLY. We couldn't do it without your support! Keep the *Local Yoke!* coming. Please send your gift today! (See response form on page 21.)



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Mon., Wed., Thurs., and Sat. 10 am–3 pm | Tues. and Fri. 2–6 pm | Sun. Closed



Best wishes to you and your family from the entire WSPL family: staff, volunteers, substitutes, and trustees.

For the month of October 2024:

- 819 items were borrowed and renewed
- \$14,100 saved by library users because they borrowed instead of buying!
- 447 eBooks and streaming audiobooks borrowed
- 399 library visitors

Come take a story walk on your way to the town tree lighting this year. Our creative Miss Vicky found a book about the New York City Christmas tree, in the spirit of the recent tree lighting event here in town!



We look forward to seeing you soon! Vicky, Rachel, Sarah, Francesca, Bob, Tess S., Brad, Tess M., Jill, Beth, Molly, and Andy

\*\*\*\*\*

### NEW ADULT FICTION

- Almodóvar, *The last dream*
- Armstrong, *Pearly everlasting*
- Banville, *The drowned*
- Cornwell, *Identity unknown*
- Emerson, *Exposure*
- Greathead, *The book of George*
- Macomber, *Christmas duet*
- Moriarty, *Here one moment*
- Powers, *Playground*
- Sparks, *Counting miracles*

- Leong, *The teller of small fortunes*
- Limón, *In praise of mystery*
- National Geographic kids almanac 2025*
- Please, *The café at the edge of the woods*

### NEW ADULT NONFICTION

- Graham, *Book and dagger*
- Neves, *Northeast medicinal plants*
- O'Reilly, *Confronting the presidents*
- Thompson, *The barn: the secret history of a murder in Mississippi*

### NEW YOUNG ADULT AND CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- Alexander, *Black star*
- Alexander, *The door of no return*
- Guinness world records 2025*



### Scrapbook Questions/created by Paula Farrell TEST YOUR TRIVIA KNOWLEDGE!

1. What caused the value of local timber to decline and was a factor in the closure of three businesses?
2. What had to happen to pay for the bonds needed to fund our town's share of the broadband network?
3. How many West Stockbridge registered voters were there in May 2015?
4. What killed the deal on some residential sales in town in 2015?

1. Siberian and Northern Canadian lumber infiltrated the market.
2. Voters had to consider an override of the provisions of proposition 2 1/2.
3. Total of 1,077
4. Lack of broadband access



This program is supported in part by a grant from the West Stockbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

# Mushrooms Featured in Program at Old Town Hall

By Liza Bennett

The Old Town Hall was packed to the gills (pun intended) to hear John Wheeler, founder and president of the Berkshire Mycological Society and acclaimed mushroom maven, share his vast knowledge on the mushrooms of Berkshire County with an eager crowd on a Friday evening in early November. After a welcome by Historical Society president Robert Salerno and an introduction to the event by Scott Edward Anderson, curator of the Berkshire Nature Talks series, Wheeler took the microphone. With a collection of colorful slides on display behind him, he described his first experience foraging for mushrooms with second-generation Italian locals. "They were poor, and mushrooms were an important source of food. They showed me my first honey mushrooms, thousands of these tiny things that covered the mountainside."

Since then, the search for mushrooms has become an obsession for Wheeler whose attention-deficient disorder (ADD) he said makes him an ideal hunter-gatherer. "Berkshire County has a greater variety of mushrooms than just about anywhere else I can name," he said, totaling, by his own count, around 1,100 distinct species. With offhanded expertise, he clicked through the slides, highlighting the features of some of the more common mushrooms in our area—black trumpets, morels, hen-of-the-woods, oysters, and chanterelles—as well as the lesser known and poisonous pigskin puffballs, dead man's fingers, and other fungi to avoid. He offered clues to identifying the different species, including their stature, color, texture, and even odor. Beyond being edible and often delicious, he explained, mushrooms have important medicinal, recreational, and even artistic uses such as their use in dyes.


After answering questions from an engaged and obviously informed audience, Wheeler joined the group for a reception downstairs that included a display of beautifully preserved mushrooms on the refreshment table.



Photo courtesy of John Wheeler

## Friends & Neighbors

### Come Celebrate with us!



### 8:30 Sunday Mass

followed by  
Coffee Hour

### St. Patrick Church

30 Albany Road  
West Stockbridge

## December Art Calendar


Guild of Berkshire Artists | [BerkshireArtists.org](http://BerkshireArtists.org) | [infoberkshireartists@gmail.com](mailto:infoberkshireartists@gmail.com) 2024

**November 14- December 1, "Canvas and Clay: Paintings and Pottery by Alice Marie Dugan"** featuring Alice Dugan. Art on Main Gallery, West Stockbridge, MA. Reception: Saturday November 16, 1-4PM

**December 7 - 22, "Holiday Small Works Show"** featuring Carolyn Abrams, Sue Aiken, Mike Coyne, Jane Craker, Sarah Morrison, Karen Carmean, and Margie Skaggs. Art on Main Gallery, West Stockbridge, MA. Reception: Sunday, December 8, 11am - 4 pm.

**No December Meeting, Berkshire Photo Gathering.** See web: [berkshirephotogathering.com/online-meetings](http://berkshirephotogathering.com/online-meetings)

See [www.berkshireartists.org](http://www.berkshireartists.org) for all the in-person and online events offered by the Guild of Berkshire Artists!




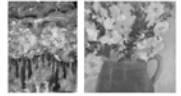
*Canvas and Clay:  
Paintings and Pottery  
by Alice Marie Dugan*

November 14 - December 1

---

**Holiday Small Works Show**






December 7 - 22  
Reception:  
Sunday, December 8, 3-6 pm

Carolyn Abrams  
Sue Aiken  
Mike Coyne  
Jane Craker

Sarah Morrison  
Karen Carmean  
Margie Skaggs



38 Main Street, West Stockbridge



# History Quiz Answer:

The intersection of State Line Road and Albany Road started out as a part of the Albany Hartford Turnpike with the main route going up Albany Road and State Line Road, a side street not connected to the west. On the 1831 map showing a "Survey of West Stockbridge," State Line Road was extended to Baker Street and on to the New York line while the road was being developed.

The intersection of State Line and Albany Roads has three significant buildings that reflect our town's history. In addition to being the source of the 2024 Rockefeller Center Christmas tree, the Albert family house is distinguished by being the oldest remaining building in town.

In the early 1760s, Elijah Williams of Stockbridge leased a tract of land from the local Mahicans to build a dam and forge on the shore of the Williams River. In 1766, he purchased the land that included much of the village center. He constructed a house on the hill above the water that is now known as the Albert house. Dates conflict on when the dam and house were built, either 1763 or 1766, but in any case, the house definitely predates any other structure in town. It is shown in the 1794 Fairchild and 1831 town surveys, and in the 1841 Barber painting of the town. The house remains in the relatively same configuration as the original but with a porch added on (see the accompanying 1896 photo).

Across the street on the southwest corner is a home built in the classic Greek revival style by Henry P. Dorr in the late 1840s. It was the first house along State Line Road, also known as Dorr's row. Henry built a carriage factory on the south side of State Line Road, and many of the houses along there were built for workers in his factory. As owner, he had the best house. Unfortunately, the factory burned down in 1876.

The property on the northwest corner of the intersection has a varied history. The land where the cannon sits is called Bossidy Park. The Bossidy family donated the land to the town in 1934 to erect a memorial to the Civil War and World War I soldiers. The memorial was then moved to the present location in front of the Town Offices. The cannon wasn't sited there until 1965.

The house behind the park/cannon is another early building, built by William Crocker. He was an early settler in the village center and supporter of the Village Congregational Church. William owned a sawmill, grist mill, and tannery south of town. The house was built sometime in the mid-1820s. It is shown on the early surveys as "Crocker's," an indication of his importance in the town.

In the three houses around this intersection, you can see the early industrial history of the town. Add the Christmas tree to them, and you have a good snapshot of West Stockbridge, a "quaint village" as one TV reporter labeled the town.



*The Albert House. Photo courtesy of West Stockbridge Historical Society*

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LAURIE LEE

# CIDER WITH ROSIE

A Memoir

Introduction by Simon Winchester

# Simon Winchester Tribute to English Author Laurie Lee

By Liza Bennett

Simon Winchester offered a heartfelt, personal tribute recently to Laurie Lee, author of the bestseller *Cider with Rosie*. Lee was not a household name to many of those who came to hear Winchester's talk at the Old Town Hall on a brisk Saturday evening in early November. But no one left without a deep appreciation for the English writer who was born in a remote corner of Gloucester in 1914 and wrote about his coming of age in the recently reissued bestseller *Cider with Rosie*.

"He was a child of the Cotswolds, a rural area not unlike the Berkshires," Winchester said, "and he painted a picture of an England which doesn't exist now." Deftly weaving together his memories of first discovering Lee's work and his own life as a writer with readings from his introduction to the new edition of *Cider with Rosie*, Winchester made an affecting case that "Lee was not just a memoirist, but a poet, and one of the greatest English writers" of the 20th century. After his presentation, Winchester signed books, provided for sale by Shaker Mill Books, co-sponsor of the event, and spoke with his many admirers at the reception downstairs at the Old Town Hall.

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or visit [www.thelocalyokel.org](http://www.thelocalyokel.org) for  
more information.





# Every issue costs us about \$1,300 to print and distribute! Please help us keep the **Local Yokel** coming!

With increased printing and postage costs, we need your help more than ever. To get the latest town news, please contribute to the *Local Yokel*. For your donation of at least \$25.00 per year we will mail each issue to you (unless you prefer otherwise). The *Local Yokel* will continue to be available free at selected locations as long as possible, but we hope you will contribute anything you can. The West Stockbridge Local Yokel, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Please check with your employer, or former employer if retired, for matching gift programs.

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West Stockbridge, MA 01266

## Community News & Events

### Stockbridge Grange Dinner

There will be no Grange dinner in December.

### Council on Aging

The West Stockbridge and Richmond COA December paper folding class will be held on Tuesday, December 3, at 9:30 am, in the Richmond Library history room. We will be making Holiday Gift Bag Miniature Matchboxes. Preregistration is requested to reserve your space; please contact Heather at Richmond Town Hall at (413) 553-7793. The class is free to residents of Richmond and West Stockbridge. It's a fun time—hope to see you there!



### The Knitters Group

The Knitters Group meets every Wednesday from 2 to 4 pm in the Community Room at the Town Offices. All crafts are welcome.

### Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Library Committee meets every second Wednesday of the month from 3:30 to 4:30 pm in the Community Room at the Town Offices. All are welcome.

*Please send your notices for Community News & Events to the Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266, email [info@thelocalyokel.org](mailto:info@thelocalyokel.org), or visit [thelocalyokel.org](http://thelocalyokel.org).*

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Animal Control	<i>John Drake</i>	464-2148		As Needed
Assessors Office	<i>Mary Stodden</i>	232-0300	ext. 303	Tues. 1-5 pm; Thurs. 9 am-1 pm
Board of Health	<i>Earl Moffatt</i>	232-0300	ext. 314	Fri. 9 am-4 pm, or by appt.
Select Board	<i>Kathleen Keresey Andy Krouss Andy Potter</i>	232-0300	ext. 319	
Town Administrator	<i>Marie Ryan</i>			Mon.-Thurs. 7 am-3 pm Fri. 7-11 am
Building Inspector	<i>Brian Duval</i>	232-0300	ext. 313	Leave Message for Inquiries
Conservation Commission	<i>Kathy Korte</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	Leave Message for Inquiries
Council on Aging	<i>John Zick</i>	232-0300	ext. 340	Leave Message for Inquiries
Emergency Management	<i>Louis Oggiani</i>	528-2175		
Fire Department	<i>Steve Traver</i>	911 or 329-7153 (non-emergency)		Mon. 6:30-9 pm
Highway Department	<i>Curt G. Wilton</i>	232-0305		Leave Message for Inquiries
Library	<i>Rachel Alter</i>	232-0300	ext. 308	Mon., Wed., Thurs., and Sat. 10 am-3 pm; Tues. and Fri. 2-6 pm; closed Sun.
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Sewer & Water Commission	<i>Michael Buffoni</i>	232-0309		
Town Accountant	<i>Elaine Markham</i>	232-0300	ext. 317	Leave Message for Inquiries
Town Clerk	<i>Ronni Barrett</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	Tues. & Thurs. 1:30-3:30 pm
Town Collector	<i>Kelli Bradbury</i>	232-0300	ext. 302	Tues. 1-5 pm; Wed. 7 am-12 pm; Thurs. 1-6 pm
Town Historian	<i>Robert Salerno</i>	232-4465		
Town Treasurer	<i>Benjamin Gelb</i>	232-0300	ext. 316	Tues. 9 am-4 pm
Transfer Station	<i>Wayne Cooper</i>	232-0307		Tues. & Thurs. 10 am-6 pm and Sat. 8 am-6 pm
Tree Warden	<i>Andrew Fudge</i>	212-9206		
Veterans Agency	<i>Tom Beasley</i>	528-1580		
Zoning Board of Appeals	<i>C. Randolph Thunfors</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	

Official Town Government Website: [weststockbridge-ma.gov](http://weststockbridge-ma.gov) • Community and Business Website: [visitweststockbridge.com](http://visitweststockbridge.com)



# December 2024 News

By Margie Skaggs

December in the Art on Main Gallery features guild artists showing small works suitable for holiday gifts. We are excited about collaborating with the West Stockbridge Holiday Market on December 7. Additional town vendors, such as Flourish Market, SALA Boutique, Shaker Mill Books, and others, are planning to participate.

“**Holiday Small Works Show**” by Guild of Berkshire Artists Carolyn Abrams, Sue Aiken, Karen Carmean, Mike Coyne, Jane Craker, Sarah Morrison, and Margie Skaggs.

**Show dates:** December 7–22, 2024

**Gallery dates and hours:** Open 11 am to 4 pm on these weekends: December 7 and 8, 14 and 15, 21 and 22, or by appointment.

**Reception date and hours:** Sunday, December 8, 11 am to 4 pm.



*from top left:*  
Mike Coyne, Bird House, Glazed Stoneware  
Sarah Morrison, Felted Wool  
Carolyn Abrams, A Breath of Heaven, Oil and Cold Wax  
Sue Aiken, Blue Twilight, Oil & Cold Wax  
Margie Skaggs, Small Casserole, Glazed Stoneware  
Jane Craker, Fall in the Berkshires, Oils  
Karen Carmean, Ancient Trees, Oil on Linen Panel





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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**December Calendar of Events**

12/2	Select Board meeting	6 pm	Town Offices and on Zoom
12/3	Giving Tuesday		
12/3	Council on Aging Craft Group meeting	9:30 am	Richmond Library History Room
12/3	Planning Board meeting	7 pm	Town Offices
12/4	Knitters Group	2-4 pm	Community Room
12/4	Lighting of Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree	8 pm	On NBC TV
12/7	Holiday Market	10 am-4 pm	Old Town Hall, 9 Main St.
12/8	Season of Light concert	2 pm	Congregational Church, 45 Main St.
12/11	Knitters Group	2-4 pm	Community Room
12/11	Friends of the Library meeting	3:30 pm	Community Room
12/11	Special Town Meeting	6 pm	Town Offices
12/12	Conservation Commission meeting	7 pm	
12/15	*** Deadline for the next <i>Local Yokel</i> ***		Send to <a href="mailto:info@thelocalyokel.org">info@thelocalyokel.org</a>
12/16	Planning Board meeting	7 pm	Town Offices
12/18	Select Board meeting	6 pm	Town Offices and on Zoom
12/18	Knitters Group	2-4 pm	Community Room
12/21	First Day of Winter		
12/24	Christmas Eve		
12/25	Christmas Day		
12/25	Hanukkah begins at sundown		
12/26	Kwanzaa begins		
12/31	New Year's Eve		

Note: Town Offices (including Community Room and Library) are located at 21 State Line Road, West Stockbridge.