

The Newspaper of Franklin Local  
Franklin, New York

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‘INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS AND FREE’

## THE NEW METHODISTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

By Frances Ruth Harris

Photos by the author

### Pastor Betsy Ott:

“The history of The Methodist Church in Franklin dates back to the early 1800s when circuit riders came through this area to preach, baptize, marry and bury. They also offered communion as they traveled. The first church met



The Open Doors Methodist Church holds services every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. in the multipurpose room,

in people’s homes, and a small group began to gather at one of the houses on Main Street, an apartment building today. The present church was built in the 1860s and reconfigured in the 1920s. At that time, the Fellowship Hall and kitchen with bathroom were added. In the 1960s, the basement was excavated to make more Sunday School classrooms. The sanctuary windows are noteworthy for their beauty. One was a gift of the McCall family.

“The church went through a long period of declining membership and

See **CHURCH**, con’t on Pg. 9



The Launch Team: 1 to r, Thomas Briggs, John Wilson, Pastor Betsy Ott, and Donald Hebbard (Absent: Steve Banks and Diane Whitbeck)

## PLANNING FRANKLIN

By Brian Brock

Like Rip Van Winkle, Franklin Township has been napping, but now is waking from its Catskill slumber. In the last few years, we have seen a wave of commercial developments: many short-term rentals, a proposed Dollar General, two attempts to site a solar array, and ideas for a major campground.

### Short-Term Rentals

For decades, visitors looking for a place to rest their heads had to look elsewhere than Franklin.

Taverns and hotels crowded the village in the 1800s but faded with the onset of the temperance movement and after a railroad was built bypassing the village. The last hotel in the village, the Franklin House (aka Franklin Inn, Franklin Hotel, or Edgerton Hotel) closed in 1936 and burned down in 1938.

But many residents ran smaller boarding houses, until the Catskills became a less-fashionable tourist destination after WWII when vacation options proliferated. The tradition was revived in 2015 when the Franklin Guest House opened as a short-term

See **PLAN**, con’t on Page 16



The Franklin Farm family in summer, 1982

Photo by Chuck Haupt

## REMEMBERING THE FARM

### PART I

By Marjorie B. Kellogg

Venture over the back of Leland Hull Road today and take the righthand fork. You won’t find much. But forty years ago, this wooded hillside was alive with Franklin’s fabled utopian community, The Farm.

The ideal of communal living had its first American flush during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with nearly eighty communities starting up in the 1840s alone. But none of these – such as New Harmony in Indiana (1825 – 1829) or the Oneida Community in New York (1848-1881)

– lasted very long in fully communal form.

The 1960s and 70s saw a revival of this lost ideal, as young Americans “dropped out” to find a more “righteous” way of life. But these hopeful experiments tended to be short-lived as well. A Franklin couple who lived on The Farm in the 1980s may offer insight as to why.

An afternoon of friendly reminiscence with Thomas and Mary Ellen Collier over tea and brownies revealed a more three-dimensional view of The Farm than this reporter had gleaned via hints and inuendo over many years in Franklin.

## ORGANIZING IN FRANKLIN

By Carla Nordstrom

For some politicians like me, Michigan is the gold standard for progressive organizing. It was not so many years ago that a Michigan governor took over the city of Flint, diverted their water system and caused a serious health emergency. Organizers in Michigan got to work and turned the state from red to blue with the trifecta of governor and both houses of the legislature running the state.

One of those organizers who lives among the trees in the Upper Peninsula is Michael Moore, the well-known film maker and podcaster. He was raised in Michigan and has been involved in political organizing since he was a teenager. Last year he released a podcast called “Blue Dot in a Red Sea,” a twelve-part series on how to organize

in rural communities.

Each podcast deals with different approaches to organizing like-minded people in a rural area to get involved in the community and local government. Franklin seemed like a perfect place to try out some of these strategies.

A few of his ideas have been tried in Franklin, like bringing ballot measures to a vote. We did that successfully in 2019 with allowing restaurants to serve wine and beer and not so successfully in 2022 with the cannabis optout. In both cases, more people voted in those elections than in years where only candidates were on the ballot. An important goal in local organizing is to bring the people out, whether for an election, meeting, or event.

Moore suggested recruiting a group to discuss local issues, get involved in

See **DOTS**, con’t on Page 13

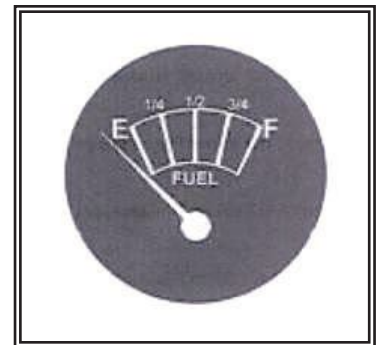
You mean it wasn’t all sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll? Not by a long shot.

The Farm in Franklin was a “satellite” of a 1200-acre spiritual community established in 1971 by hippie-activist Stephen Gaskin and a group of like-minded friends. They set out from San Francisco in a sixty-vehicle caravan – painted school buses and all – landing in Summertown, TN. The community was non-denominational, open to all, and strictly vegan.

Mary Ellen: “Our main protein was beans...First thing we learned was that a vegan lifestyle would provide enough resources for all the world to eat – an equitable diet.”

Membership required signing a vow of poverty.

See **FARM**, con’t on Page 17



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# Your Neighbor's View... and Strong Opinions!

## CHAOS OR COMPROMISE?

To the Editor:

Sessions of Congress run in two-year cycles. The 118<sup>th</sup> session of the United States Congress began January 3, 2023, and completed its first year January 3, 2024. A Democratic President, a Democratic controlled Senate, and a Republican majority in the House of Representatives were unable to work together. The second year of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, beginning January 2024, has resulted in the House and the Senate escalating to a totally dysfunctional national government unable to pass legislation.

Discussions about increasing the national debt to avoid default have been barely avoided by several short-term agreements, essentially kicking the can down the road until the next deadline. A military aid package to Ukraine, Taiwan, and Israel has been stalemated by a demand to include Mexican border security provisions. This is threatening global democracy and preventing much needed revisions to a legal, speedier route to allow people to work in the United States and obtain citizenship. A bipartisan compromise on border security and immigration policy was developed over several months of intense negotiations, only to get torpedoed by a presidential candidate unwilling to allow the incumbent rival candidate to take the credit, should it become law.

Congress has slowly become more and more polarized over the last ten years. Neither political party is free of responsibility with respect to the current political mess in Washington. The lack of partisan cooperation has stymied governmental action – preventing implementation of policies that polls tell us the

majority of the populace favors. The result is minority control by a handful of congressional members, who determine what bills can or cannot even get to the floor for a vote – complete chaos.

The first year of the 118<sup>th</sup> session (2023) could be called a “do-nothing” Congress: only 39 pieces of legislation were enacted, only 288 made it to the floor for a vote.

The second year (2024) looks to be no better: only 7 bills enacted in the first two months.

The 117<sup>th</sup> session (2021 and 2022) enacted 365 bills and brought 649 to a floor vote.

The 116<sup>th</sup> session (2019 and 2020) enacted 344 bills and brought 746 to a floor vote.

The 115<sup>th</sup> session (2017 and 2018) enacted 443 bills and brought 867 to a floor vote.

This downward trend has continued through three administrations: Obama, Trump, and Biden.

How did we get to this point where a handful of elected officials, sometimes just one person, can hold power over 100 Senators or 435 members of the House of Representatives?

Partisan politics have built slowly over time with petty policy bickering. But over recent decades, the goal of successive administrations appears to be to do little but reverse the policies and programs of the prior administration. This has been publically stated by elected leaders.

Let's take a look at how our concept of democracy developed. Colonization of North America by Britain resulted in thirteen original colonies. Many colonists had lived under a monarchy in Britain or under British control in North America. Rule by a distant monarchy resulted in a demand for a different style of government. Constraints on trade and governmental autonomy created the

formation of a loose federation, the Continental Congress, to address injustices. The First Continental Congress served as a central governing body for the thirteen colonies and coordinated their resistance to British rule.

These representatives served voluntarily, traveled great distances by horse, left their families and businesses for months at a time. Debating alternative forms of government, they developed unique concepts for the representation of constituents, to eliminate authoritarian rule, and set limits on federal power, while preserving specific rights for individual colonies – now our states.

Compromise was required to present a united front to the monarchy. The Continental Congress declared that their rights as English subjects included life, liberty, property ownership, and trial by jury. They denounced taxation without representation, called for a boycott of British goods, and petitioned King George III to remedy their grievances.

These colonial governments were widely different in economic, cultural, and social beliefs – probably as diverse or more so than our fifty states are now. Yet they were able to work together, discuss, and reach compromises necessary to create a union that resulted in the Revolutionary War and independence for the United States of America. Our Founding Fathers knew that a diverse constituency could only be governed through compromise and conciliation.

The Second Continental Congress continued as the central government through the Revolutionary War, then went on to develop the Constitution of the United States of America. They created a three-branch system of government with checks and balances. And they did it by many face-to-face debates and compromises. A democracy was created – more correctly a republic – which has stood the test of time until the present crisis of dysfunction.

In the Federalist No. 39, James Madison proposed the election of officials by the people to serve the people, a defining characteristic of a republican

## THREE-WAY GRIFT

To the Editor:

Money for nothing? A fledgling energy company is looking to profit from promoting its use of nonexistent processes while environmental groups and Albany politicians are campaigning and fundraising by opposing a process that the company does not plan to use.

No one looks good.

Southern Tier CO<sub>2</sub> to Clean Energy Solutions LLC (aka Southern Tier Solutions or STS) has proposed drilling the Southern Tier for methane, using that gas to generate electricity, and trapping carbon dioxide underground – whatever it produces and then some. The company claims that by swapping it for the methane in black shales, STS would not have to frack.

High volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) was banned in New York by regulation in 2014 and by legislation in 2020. To frack a well, millions of gallons of water, chemicals, and sand are pumped down under pressure great enough to fracture rocks. The sand grains prop open the fractures. Most of that mixture comes back up to be disposed of, followed by methane.

Southern Tier Solutions proposes a different extraction by pumping at much lesser pressure supercritical carbon dioxide down one well, along the natural fractures, and up neighboring well(s) where it collects a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide.

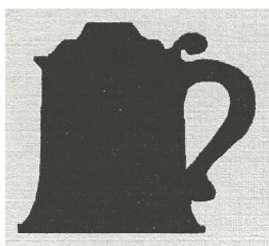
Examining STS records, all I can find is one Texan with a website, a Binghamton P.O. Box, and a hotel room. Last fall, this company drew attention when its president Bryce Phillips mailed offers of leases to 6,500 landowners in Broome, Tioga, and Chemung counties. Also, he organized six meetings for any landowners interested, two in each county – although the last one in mid-December was cancelled. While Phillips did two interviews in early December, he has not been heard from since, despite attempts by many reporters to contact him. Typically, drillers hold discussions with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation before applying for a drilling permit, in order to identify problem areas. With such novel methods, you would expect such discussions to be early and often. STS has yet to begin. In presentations and on the website, Phillips has been long on leasing but short on technical details. In Texas, there is an expression: all hat and no cattle.

STS proposes drilling and extracting methane from the Marcellus and Utica formations. My investigation finds that its proposed methods are experimental at best and may be merely theoretical. Environmental groups, by falsely claiming that STS would frack with carbon dioxide, are reaping publicity and donations. Even worse, several assembly members and senators have introduced a bill to extend the existing ban to exclude fracking with carbon dioxide, which would be no impediment to STS if it ever started drilling.

This echoes the controversy over HVHF. A decade ago, the industry, DEC, and greens similarly insisted that thousands of wells might be drilled throughout the Southern Tier, hyping either the benefits or the hazards. At least STS is realistic in that economically recoverable gas is limited to the region along the southern boundary of New York: Broome, Tioga, Chemung, and maybe Steuben counties.

It's a tempest in a teacup this time.

Brian Brock  
Franklin NY



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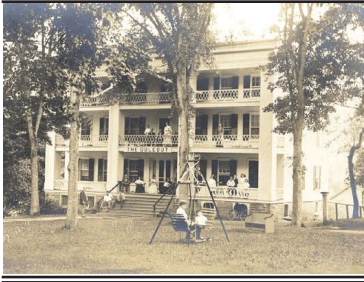
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See CHAOS, con't on Pg. 19





# FRANKLIN LOCAL

Local News  
Local Events

Local Issues  
Local Concerns



**The New Franklin Register celebrates retiring mayor, Thomas Briggs, for his long service and devotion to the village and town of Franklin, and for the wisdom he has shared in our pages.**

**Thanks, Mr. Mayor!**



## UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND OTHER RAMBLINGS

In February of 2014, my neighbor, Paul Deandrea, village trustee at the time, approached me about running for mayor. The current mayor, John Campbell, had decided to step down and focus his efforts on overseeing the development of the Railroad & Community Museum.

Having retired a couple of years prior as a county agency director and having not yet given up on the idea that "government" does not have to be a bad word, I threw my hat in the ring. The ensuing election was a success. I won in a landslide victory, gathering 28 votes on the way toward crushing my non-existent foe.

Ten years have passed. We saw a boom and then a recession. We observed things stabilize and then withstood a pandemic. We experienced a real estate boom and a subsequent migration of new neighbors. Now we're hunkering down against inflated prices, experiencing a tepid real estate market and hoping for the local economy to warm up again as investors wallow in a record shattering stock market.

Here in Franklin, we are faced with yet another challenge; something as serious as the tragic school fire that occurred over 50 years ago, something that again threatens the viability of our beloved school. Anyone who has attended FCS or has been to functions there knows how special it is to its students, their parents, and the community. In many respects it is Franklin's lifeblood. I recently attended an elementary school awards event and was privileged to share in the energy and excitement of these bright, happy young people reciting their lessons and warmly cheering for their classmates (I also was schooled on the many interesting facts about the life and times of the resident guinea pig). I'm not sure that the quality and intimacy of this fellowship could be replicated in a larger school, especially for those students who have a difficult time socializing. In my dealings with many of the local people who have graduated from Franklin Central School, I can see how this small school upbringing has had a positive impact on how they interact with others.

Unfortunately, the powers that be in the State of New York, though espousing excellence in the pursuit of educational prowess, have prioritized reducing their huge deficit over the needs of FCS and indirectly, the needs of the Village of Franklin. The Governor's proposal to make a

## THE MAYOR'S CORNER

With Tom Briggs

serious reduction in state aid for our school district could have a devastating effect.

Up until the 1960s, the Village of Franklin was able to support local small businesses. Old timers have told me that the store buildings were all occupied and Main Street was more of a destination than a thoroughfare. Seeing some of these storefronts vacant today is dispiriting. Today we have entrepreneurs interested in investing in Franklin's small but vital downtown. Unfortunately, because of the topography and water runoff from the hill behind the primary section, there is insufficient room for a proper septic system and leach field. We are in the process of reapplying for a grant to upgrade the buildings, but their use is limited without addressing the sewage problem. For decades, village officials have discussed getting grant funding to install a sewage system with a sewage treatment plant. Regrettably, the cost of such an undertaking, even with grant funding, would be prohibitive. Last year we learned about an alternative plan that would involve pumping stations pushing the effluent out to leach fields where sewage would break down naturally and safely without burdensome operational expenses. We are exploring grant funding for a comprehensive engineering study to evaluate the efficacy and affordability of this project. We will need strong support from village residents to make this happen, and I feel that a bustling downtown is worth the effort and the support of the community.

When the Village of Franklin was incorporated in 1836, it was the undertaking of a handful of the hamlet's leaders who felt that it was time to secure an official status for the community. It may have also had something to do with the founding of the Literary Institute in the same year. From the original minutes it appears that the trustees met infrequently and had no working budget. They had no taxing authority, so I'm assuming that if anything was accomplished, it was done voluntarily or under the private means with local manpower. At some point early on, concern was raised about stray livestock roaming around on the main drag (at the time, the Catskill Turnpike). One could imagine that cattle and sheep and goats etc. were pillaging gardens and fields, much to the ire of Franklin's residents.

Consequently, the village fathers decided to hire a pound master to impound the perpetrating strays. The pound master would collect fines from the owners before releasing the animals. This was the extent of village government for the most part in the early days, but the point where the village started to have a budget. The



growth and development of the community was primarily driven by the collective efforts of the private sector. The village government did not have the means or the desire to provide much assistance to village residents. This was still the trade and barter era when the availability and use of currency was limited. Due to the lack of assistance from local government, Franklinites' survival and prosperity was dependent on cooperation, giving rise to a spirit of reciprocity (exchanging goods or services for mutual benefit). This encouraged stake holding, where those involved took pride and shared ownership of a business or project. Farmer Brown might assist farmer Smith in building a corncrib in exchange for clearing and cultivating a field. Both benefited from the experience, in added value as well as satisfaction from helping each other.

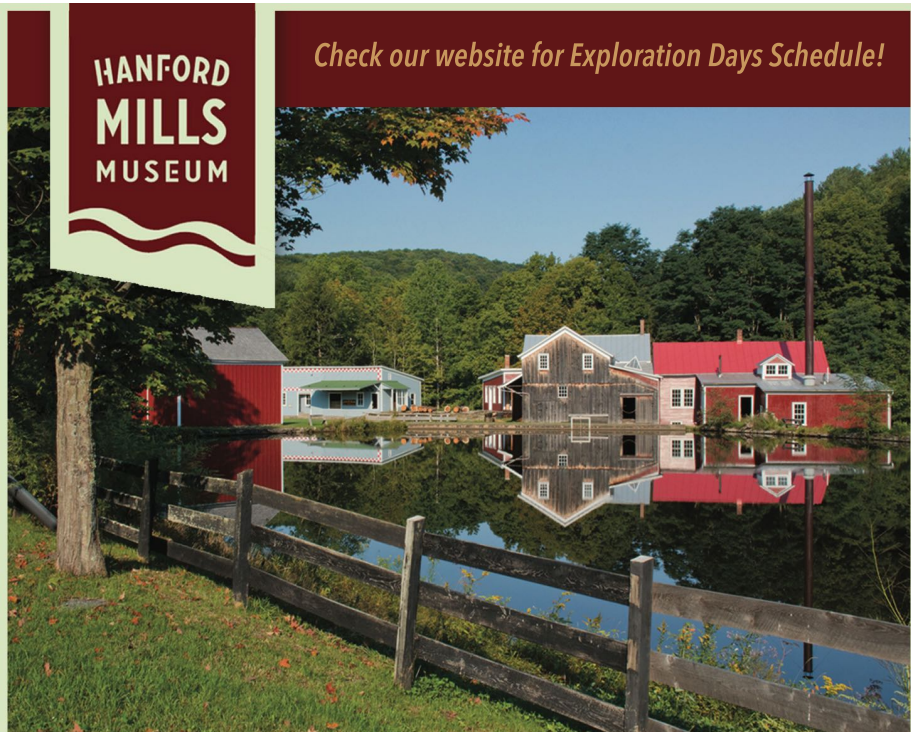
Today the practice of reciprocity has been monetized, and in my opinion, devalued...sacrificed for the sake of convenience. The spirit of gratitude has been removed from the quotient and replaced with indifference. As a society, we no longer need to work collectively and cooperatively with our neighbors to succeed. We just need to make money to pay for our needs.

This distancing of familiarity has had its effect on voluntarism as well. Franklin's long history of well-attended voluntary organizations and public outpouring of support for those in need has served the community well and has brought people together in times of distress. Times are changing though. I myself find it easier to send a donation than to give up a few hours of my time to lend a hand. Like the shift away from face-to-face commerce, the informal support system that organized volunteers used to provide is weakening. In Franklin, we no longer have Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts because we no longer have volunteers to lead them, Our Emergency Squad and Fire Department are undersubscribed, and our Rotary Club could use a boost in membership as well. More young adults are needed to step forward to fill the void and take charge of the changes needed for Franklin to shine in years to come.

This will be my last Mayor's Corner article. After a decade, I will be stepping down to allow a new Mayor to bring in fresh ideas to continue making Franklin a nice place to live. I've thoroughly enjoyed my stint as Mayor and will always hold dear the wonderful people and experiences that came with the job. As social scientist Granville Hicks once observed, government at its most local level is the purest form of democracy.

I agree.





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### EARTHSCHOOL PROGRAMS – 2024

- “Cooking for Cancer Prevention & After” Good Cheap Foods
- “Plant Kinship Introductory” The Root Cellar
- “Cultivating Cognitive Agility” The Root Cellar
- “Plant I.D. Walk & Wild Food Tasting” West Kortright Ctr.
- “Tree Walk: Cultivate Perceptual Diversity” Catskill Yoga Fest

**First Annual “Plants Speak” Gathering**  
Saturday, September 21st, 2024  
Hosted at The Uplands Center, Walton, NY

Plant-Farmer Collaborations  
See social platforms for developments

**The Shredding of Our Trees Project**  
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**Sacred Earth Gathering**  
Are you called to be with Nature in a quiet way?  
If so, we welcome you. We meet monthly in safe spaces. We Acknowledge Land & Place, the sacred, to heal past injurious ways with Earth, Ancestors & Nature and be eco-circular. We, who are better together as respectful human-beings.  
Pre-register: – 3moonsisters@gmail.com

#### Who We Are / What We Do

EarthSchool at Plant Pioneers seeks to restore & heal our kin- necton to our Mother, Earth, Plant life & Nature. We are a multi-generational grassroots collective of friends, family, and mentors. Earthists who listen to and speak for the-Nature-that-surrounds-us & Plant Kin. We each heed & are deeply grateful for the guidance of First Nation Peoples of this land & teachings of Nature herself. We believe human-kind must take a giant leap from the ways we treat Plants, Trees, and Nature, NOW, and include them at every juncture in our lives, at the decision-making tables, especially when the decisions we are making are about them and their lives.

Learn More: [www.PlantPioneers.org](http://www.PlantPioneers.org)  
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as Marguerite Uhlmann-Bower  
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Contact: 3moonsisters@gmail.com

## ROTARY TRASH PICKUP: VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

By Betsy Ott

Many of you have heard of the Franklin Rotary Club but, like me when I first arrived in Franklin, you might not know all that the Club does around the village and community. If you live or have a business on Main Street, you probably know that Rotary places lit Christmas trees on Main Street during the holiday season and plants seasonal flower barrels on Main Street in spring and summer. Rotary also sponsors the Youth Exchange Program that sent Franklin Central School student Griffin Leddy to Denmark last year and brought Fede Rama to Franklin from Italy this year. We also send students to the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) Conference, where they develop leadership and life skills. Other Rotary activities include selling refreshments at Franklin Stage Company performances, participating in Old Franklin Day, and obtaining a 2022 Rotary District grant for a summer arts program for community children. We contribute to various local groups, including the Franklin Community Education Foundation, the Franklin Firehouse and the Greater Franklin Food Pantry.

Another ongoing Rotary Club project is roadside trash pickup along State Highway 357 in Franklin, which is done twice a year in spring and fall. Rotary International seeks to preserve, sustain, and improve the environment as part of its mission to support community quality of life. The entire upstate New York area, including other clubs in Delaware and Otsego Counties, participates in roadside cleanup events. Recently, we have focused on or around Earth Day to increase visibility for this important service. Our spring trash pickup date is Wednesday, April

24. Our group will be meeting between 5:00 and 5:30 p.m. outside the Methodist Church on Main and Water Streets in Franklin.

Maybe you wonder why trash pickup is so important. What difference does it make? Doesn't trash just naturally decompose anyway? Actually, trash causes many problems.

Trash attracts vermin and predatory animals foraging for food and spreads disease from germs on food containers, cans, cigarette butts, gum and other debris.

It creates a dangerous environment for pets and other animals. Dogs can become addicted to nicotine and eating cigarette butts can make them very sick or cause death. Other animals are also affected.

Plastic bags, plastic six-pack holders, and small plastic pieces don't decompose quickly. They can cause strangulation or death if eaten by birds or other animals.

It pollutes our waterways, killing the fish and waterfowl that so many of us enjoy here.

It destroys nature's beauty. One of the reasons many of us love living here is the natural beauty all around us. Filled with litter and garbage, the views quickly lose their charm.

So, why is there so much garbage around today? The biggest source is packaging, such as fast food wraps and clamshells, cans and plastic bottles, beverage cups, shopping bags and more.



Using trash barrels and garbage receptacles, recycling cans, or taking your to-go trash home instead of throwing it by the roadside will really help.

The Franklin Rotary Club will keep picking up the trash along State Highway 357 in and outside the village twice a year, but we need your help. Please volunteer an hour or two for this project on April 24<sup>th</sup>! You can contact us by email at [franklinrotary7170@gmail.com](mailto:franklinrotary7170@gmail.com) or on Facebook @franklinnyrotaryclub for more information.

Help us keep this area safe and beautiful!

*Betsy Ott is president of the Franklin Rotary Club*



*Rotary Club members and volunteers (including Rotary Youth Exchange student Fede Rama) at the most recent Highway Trash Pickup.*



## GARDENING AT WILL

I recently retired and have been eagerly looking forward to being free to garden at will. Already, my desk has been taken over by overwintering containers of succulents and giant red *Cordyline*. I have sown twice the usual number of perennial seeds, currently set outside for their winter chilling period. I have also become an avid viewer of garden webinars, listener of garden podcasts, student, and traveler.

Good sources of garden webinars include *Garden Design* magazine and The Garden Conservancy. I enjoyed Fergus Garrett's discussion on working with bulbs and David Culp's deep dive into his garden plantings by season (both in *Garden Design*) and Troy Scott Smith's series on Sissinghurst Through the Seasons (The Garden Conservancy). The Arnold Arboretum has an amazing set of YouTube garden lectures, including their "Tree Mob" series. Also, classes taught via Zoom are available from the Berkshire Botanical Garden, the Massachusetts Hor-

tical Society, Innisfree Garden, and many other horticultural institutions. Search online for all these entities to find available recordings and upcoming events. Also, sign up to receive their emails.

For interesting garden podcasts, I look to Joe Lamp'l of "Growing a Greener World," Tom Christopher of "Growing Greener," and Margaret Roach of "A Way to Garden." A fun series is *Gardens Illustrated's* podcast "Talking Gardens," in which they ask the stars of the British horticultural world to describe their dream garden and its dream plants.

In February, I attended an excellent two-day class at the Berkshire Botanical Garden on propagation, taught by Adam Wheeler of Broken Arrow nursery. Among other things, I learned how to root cuttings. Adam discussed softwood, green wood, and hardwood cuttings. I am currently trying to root hardwood cuttings from my spring-blooming witch hazels and from a winterberry holly.

I learned that hardwood cuttings are best taken when the shrub or tree is dormant. Late winter

is the perfect time to do it. The main steps are to make your slanted cut just below a bud, scrape a little of the bark off near the cut, dip each cutting in a root hormone, stick the cuttings in a pot of freely draining soil, and wet the soil thoroughly. Then put a taller stake in the middle of the pot and tent the pot with a clear plastic bag secured by a rubber band. This maintains the humidity needed for nurturing the cuttings until they root. Set the pot in a well-lit area but not in direct sunlight, and wait a few weeks until you have signs of new growth. Avoid the temptation to pull the cuttings out of the soil now and then to check on their root growth.

My garden travels began in March. I went to a snowdrop festival in Pennsylvania called the Galanthus Gala and spent a day at the Philadelphia Flower Show. Late March brings the smaller Capital Region Flower & Garden Expo in Troy. Flower shows provide that wonderful immersion in tulips and daffodils for which we all yearn in late winter and early spring. Even the smallest shows provide plenty of blooms

## GREENBANKS GARDENING

### With Deborah Banks

amid the displays of heat pumps and replacement windows.

My future travel plans include a visit to the Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware during prime *Trillium* viewing season and attendance at plant sales at Catskill Native Nursery in Kerhonkson, NY, and Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, NY. A trip to the New York Botanical Garden is also in my future.

But how much time does all this leave me for being in my own garden? Naturally, I have grandiose visions of all the ways in which my garden will benefit from my retirement. Long deferred chores will be performed and new projects completed. Finally, the peony that no longer blooms will get moved into the full sun that it deserves. The *Sanguisorba* that always flops will get staked. The lilacs will get pruned just after their flowering ends. The red-twig dogwoods will be cut back hard in spring, so the

twig color is brighter next winter. Invasive buttercups will be rooted out from my *Primula swale* (again). Contemplated projects include a nursery bed for new purchases and a cold frame for seedlings and container plants.

Laudable ambitions, or should I say laughable? At this point in early March, I can duck the question of how I am measuring up. I confess that I am already "behind," with very little pruning accomplished to date. However, my overriding goal is to enjoy my garden and not let my chore list overwhelm me. Even when my garden is a mess, I still want to appreciate it and seek out the daily changes in the garden. Flower buds opening, new shoots and leaves on young shrubs, the singing of newly arrived warblers. Gardening is magical, and I can now choose to be part of it every day.

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# WEIGHTY VOTING

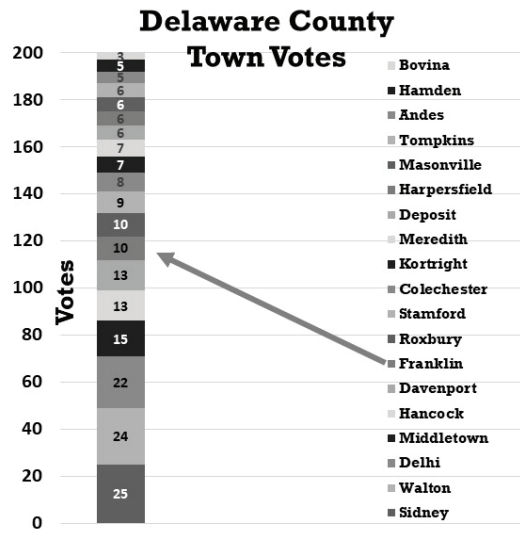
Staff Report

Franklin is represented at the county level by our supervisor. The bar graph at right shows where our town ranks in the county pecking order. Among the 19 towns, Franklin is average with 2,288 residents and five percent of the votes. Supervisor Smith casts ten votes out of the total of two hundred.

With an elected legislature, each legislator represents a voting district of approximately the same population. So it is with our state Assembly and Senate and with the federal House of Representatives. In contrast, supervisors in Delaware County represent towns of greatly different populations. Sidney has 5,536 residents, whereas Bovina has 658. Therefore, votes are allotted to supervisors in proportion to their town's residents. As a result, the supervisor from Sidney has over eight times the voting power of the one from Bovina. Theoretically, this gives equal representation to the residents, but in practice, weighted voting gives vastly unequal power to the supervisors.

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the board of supervisors (BOS) adjusted the allotment of these votes to reflect population counts in the 2020 US Census. Also, rather than the old allotment of a total of 4,788 votes, the current system allots only 200, making the voting record easier to follow.

Having town supervisors rule the county is a structure of government going back to the start of our state. But times change. Now, Delaware County is one of



only a quarter of the counties (17 of 62) that are governed by a board of supervisors and one of only an eighth (8 of 62) that are administered by the chairperson of the board.

Last year at its annual meeting, the county Farm Bureau voted to support an elected legislature, although they did not lay out their reasons. In January, a meeting of our county's mayors discussed this change. It triggered a blistering rebuttal from the BOS chairwoman, who would be out of a job.

Typically, when counties modernize to an elected legislature, they choose to appoint a professional manager. In fact, even half the counties that still have a board of supervisors have made this upgrade.

Under the existing system, how have Franklin supervisors used their votes to represent the interests of the townspeople?

Hard to tell because they have not reported back to us.



# FREE RABIES CLINIC

Staff Report

The annual rabies clinic in Franklin will be held Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Franklin Fire Hall, 351 Main Street. This free clinic is run by the Delaware County Department of Public Health. You must bring a record of any previous vaccinations to show that your pet is eligible for the three-year coverage. Pet owners are legally required to vaccinate against rabies all of their dogs, cats, and domesticated ferrets within four months of birth and again within a year after that, under Public Health Law, Article 21, Title 4. In addition, the law requires periodic booster shots.

Failure to vaccinate may result in a \$200 fine. Should your unvaccinated pet bite a person or animal, then it must be confined for observation for ten days. If boarding is required, this will be at the owner's expense. Should your unvaccinated pet itself be bitten, then it must be either euthanized or quarantined for six months. By contrast, a vaccinated pet requires only a booster shot within five days of the attack. Once symptoms show, rabies is almost always fatal. Therefore, symptomatic animals are euthanized.

At the Franklin clinic, dogs must be on a leash and kept under control. Cats and ferrets should be in a carrying case. Of course, you are responsible for cleaning up after your pets. If you cannot make the Franklin clinic, there are clinics in neighboring towns during the summer: <http://delawarecountypublichealth.com/calendar/>

For more information: 607-832-5200

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A portion of every commission I earn is dedicated to support The Delaware Valley Humane Society





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# kitchen basics

with  
**Carla Nordstrom**

## FOCACCIA

Making a delicious focaccia takes two days. You mix the dough together on the first day, place it in the refrigerator for at least 18 hours, and bake it on the second day after a 3-4 hour rise at room temperature. Baking focaccia may be a long process but it requires little attention. Be prepared to get your hands oily and doughy. Making focaccia may be messy, but when the results come out of the oven, it is totally satisfying.

This recipe is based on

<https://alexandracoops.com/2018/03/02/overnight-refrigerator-focaccia-best-focaccia/>

### Ingredients:

4 cups of flour, either all purpose or bread flour  
2 tsp. salt  
2 tsp. dry yeast  
2 cups of lukewarm water  
3-4 tbsp. olive oil  
1 tbsp. chopped rosemary  
Coarse salt, if desired



Photo by Carla Nordstrom

Combine flour and salt in a large bowl. Add the yeast to the lukewarm water and let it sit until bubbles form on the top (about 10 minutes).

Make a hole in the center of the flour and pour the liquid into it. Mix it with a wooden spoon or spatula until it forms a sticky dough. Spread a thin layer of olive oil over the top of the dough.

Cover it with plastic wrap, a damp dish towel, or a plate and let it rest in the refrigerator for 18-24 hours. If plans change, it can sit in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Grease a 9 x 13 rectangular pan or two 8-inch square or round pie pans with butter and a thin layer of olive oil.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and slide it into the larger pan, or divide in half to put in the small pans. I often will make one small loaf and a few days later bake the other. Lightly flatten the dough and spread a thin layer of oil on top.

Allow it to rise for 3 to 4 hours at room temperature. The oil will protect the top from drying out, so it isn't necessary to cover it.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Cover your fingers with olive oil and stick them into the dough to dimple it by pushing down and pulling up along rows. Sprinkle chopped fresh rosemary and coarse salt on top. Bake until golden, between 25 and 30 minutes.



Photo by Andy Bobrow

In the summer when the garden is full of chives and fresh herbs, I use this recipe to make what I call art bread. I lay out patterns of herbs, thin red and yellow pepper slices and sliced black and green olives to look like flowers. This bread is always a big hit for entertaining.





# INSIDE LOCAL REAL ESTATE with SUSAN BARNETT

## A MARKET AND AN INDUSTRY IN FLUX

If you own a home, or hope to one day, you need to know what's happening in the real estate industry. It's in major upheaval.

Multiple class action lawsuits across the country charged that the real estate industry, and the National Association of Realtors, were unfairly requiring sellers to pay for the services of a buyer's agent.

Traditionally, a seller

paid a listing agent, and the listing agent split that with the buyer's agent. Meaning, almost all the time, a buyer hasn't been paying their agent – the seller has. It was baked right into the listing agreement, a percentage of the sale price. The listing agent simply split the agreed-upon commission with the buyer's agent. If the property didn't sell, no one got paid.

The reasoning was that the seller is the one making money, while the buyer is already spending money for a house, an attorney, taxes, insurance, bank fees and closing costs, as well as any repairs needed after closing. Not paying for a buyer's agent meant a buyer could increase their buying budget.

The court case argued that this system was unfair to sellers. This winter, a judge agreed, sending shock waves through the industry. Some of the biggest corporate companies paid well over half a billion dollars to settle rather than face a lengthy court battle. And some companies started looking into alternatives to the National Association

of Realtors.

Then, on March 15, the National Association of Realtors, the NAR, announced it had reached a \$418M settlement, too. Starting in July, listing agents can no longer offer to compensate a buyer's agent in the MLS listing, something that was once mandatory.

It is impossible to state just how huge a change this is for the industry, and what a challenge this has become for the future of the National Association of Realtors.

Until now, most local Multiple Listing Services require brokers and agents to belong to the NAR before they can join the MLS. So, NAR membership is required to put their listings where realtors, and websites like Zillow, Trulia and Realtor.com, can find them. Most every company in our area, including mine, belongs to both the NAR and the local MLS.

Now companies all over the country are re-evaluating the NAR, the current MLS system, and trying to figure out how best to serve their clients in a new business model.

But all this impacts buy-

ers and sellers, too.

Despite a lot of marketing done by the NAR to help people understand what, exactly, a realtor does, many buyers and sellers often think they don't need one. But studies show houses for sale by owner sell for less than houses represented by a licensed realtor. And houses on MLS sell faster.

For a seller, not having to pay a buyer's agent sounds like great news. But sellers may have to drop their prices to stay competitive. And it can mean more problematic transactions, if licensed realtors aren't pre-qualifying buyers, doing showings, and working together negotiating the sale and ensuring the deal gets to closing.

If buyers start having to pay a buyer's agent, an amount that has historically been about 3% of the sale price, it may reduce the amount of house they can afford or make it impossible for them to buy. Or they'll go on their own and navigate through the negotiations and closing as best they can.

Buyer agents now will



be required to have clients sign a buyer agency agreement – a contract to work together for a specified period, and an understanding that the buyer will pay their agent if the seller won't.

Generally, buyers not only don't want to pay an agent – they don't even feel comfortable signing an agreement.

Can any real estate commission be negotiated? Of course. But there's a lot of up-front expense for a real estate agent prior to a sale. A reduced commission can mean a buyer's agent could make more working at the local burger franchise, and have a steady paycheck, too. One study predicts a million licensed realtors nationwide will leave.

No one knows just how this will end. But the change has begun.

*Susan Barnett is owner and principal broker of Upstate Country Realty in Franklin.*

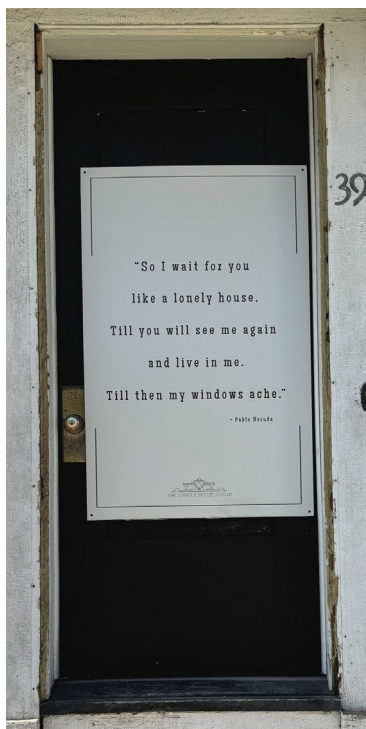


Photo by Andy Bobrow

## COMIT Primer

By Brian Brock

A free database for all the properties in Delaware County is accessible online. It is a graphic information system or GIS from the county Planning and Watershed Department (P&W): <https://spatial.vhb.com/comit/> C.O.M.I.T. stands for Community Online Mapping Information Tool. The available tools allow you to:

View any land at scales as large as five feet to the inch.

View the approximate boundaries of properties within the county, but only on the larger-scale images.

Locate a property by its address or tax ID number. Search for properties owned by a person, company, or government.

Identify the owner of any property.

Find the property acreage, frontage, property class, school district, and assessed value.

Locate any wetland on a property or

land in the floodplain.

Find the soil types on a property.

Measure a length, elevation, or area.

Note that it may take P&W many months to update ownership after a sale. Also, the assessed values may be dated. But you can check the current ownership and value at the website of the Franklin assessor using the tax ID number <https://town-of-franklin-ny.org/departments/assessor/assessment-rolls/>

The default image is a mosaic of aerial photographs from 2016, which should be updated. Also, there are two mosaics from 2004 and 2001, but they have a lower resolution. In addition, there are nine types of basemaps: Navigation, Open Streets Map (color, light gray, or dark gray), Streets, Topographic (shaded), USGS National, USA Topo, and Hybrid Imagery/Map. They are accessible with the pull-down menu in the upper right corner.

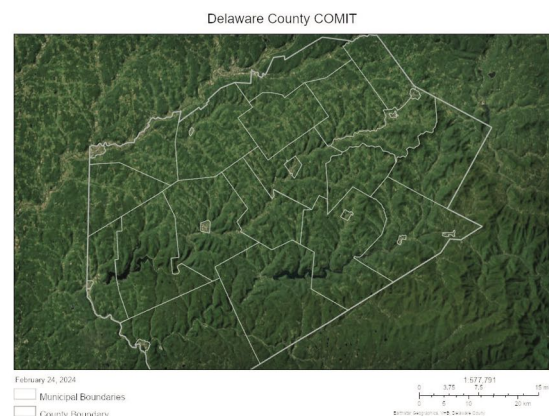
You can pan across the landscape by dragging the image and even rotate it. Scale can be changed with the pair of buttons (+ and -) in the upper left corner.

Map Tools (aka features) are accessed via the buttons on the upper left and right margins. A button in the lower right corner lets you toggle to a full screen and back.

You can Export (aka print) any image that you create, for example the one at left. Before printing you can annotate maps with points, lines, shapes, or text.

There is a short online tutorial (aka Help) if you need help in accessing one of the many features of COMIT.

It is an invaluable resource for any landowner or prospective landowner.



Satellite photo of Delaware County showing boundaries of towns and villages. Andes is shown despite the village being dissolved twenty years ago. COMIT



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**CHURCH, con't from Page 1** pastors who did not live in the community. It was officially closed in January of 2023. However, there was community-wide interest in seeing the church remain, and so a group called the Launch Team began discussion with the District Superintendent about forming a new congregation.

"A "soft launch" opening was held in July at St Paul's Episcopal Church and the group met there through October when they moved to the Bennett Funeral Home. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the Launch Team was told they could reopen the former Methodist Church building for worship and for their ministries.

"The Launch Team, and other volunteers, have cleaned out, painted and redone the Fellowship Hall as a place of welcome and functionality. Work on the rest of the building will continue, with hopes of public support and grant funding.



"The name 'Open Doors' was chosen intentionally. The Open Doors United Methodist Community is welcoming to anyone seeking engagement with the community, spiritual growth, and good conversation about timely topics. So far, we have offered grief groups and Bible study, but our plan is to have storytelling events, musical concerts, and WiFi access with Open Doors for community youth and adults who would like a meeting place in the village at least one day a week."

In an email, Pastor Ott related her strong ministerial and pastoring with her

many family connections going back to 1919.

"My maternal grandfather, Rev. Dr. John Greenwood entered ministry in 1919 after surviving WWI. He served many churches in the Hudson Valley and Catskills and was retired when he and my grandmother, Florence, moved to Franklin in 1971. Their house on Center Street has been the family home ever since. My father, Rev. Gene Black, met my mother, Faith, while in college and came to New York from his home state of Indiana. He served churches in the Catskills and Hudson Valley, including Tannersville and Delhi, before arriving in Franklin in 1963. In 1969 he was diagnosed with glioblastoma and died a year later. My mother moved with my grandparents to the house on Center Street where she lived until her death in 2019.

"I had a call to ministry in my late 30s, and at the

"I grew up in this area and decided to return for the community connections. I graduated from DLI/FCS and have maintained friendships over the years. My family lived here, so I was always coming back to Franklin. I know from my own experience that people need a pastor they can relate to and who is 'around' to meet them where they live and work. And God called me to see what we could do together to make a place of welcome and spiritual connection in our community, so I agreed to take this on with quite a bit of excitement about the possibilities!"

A visit to the sanctuary revealed work in progress. Parts of the organ are stored on top of the pews. When the Grand Gorge Methodist Church merged with the Harpersfield Methodist Church, Open Doors received kitchenware, including many tables and chairs. Open Doors gave a small donation in appreciation of the gifts from Grand Gorge.

Pastor Ott said they occasionally have "messy church," a 15-minute service for children and families. Once the kitchen is complete, they will all share a meal together afterwards. So far 9 to 11 children have participated in the 15-minute messy service. Ott said there will be special services, such as Thanksgiving and blue Christmas. Blue Christmas is for those who have unhappy Christmas memories. There is also a weekly Bible study. Ott invites everyone to come and claim their seat.

Launch Team leader Donald Hebbard is a retired dairy farmer who began his faith journey as a child attending the Methodist Church in Franklin. Hebbard will soon work just three days a week at his fencing business, as his grandson is taking over the business. This will give him the rest of each week to plan and execute the physical rebirth of the church. Continued painting and re-

age of 45 entered seminary at the Theological School of Drew University. I completed my MDiv in 1999 and was ordained an elder in 2002. I have served in Westbrookville, Buchanan, Lake Ronkonkoma, and Park Avenue in Manhattan, where I was the first woman senior pastor. I then served for eight years as the District Superintendent of the NY/CT District, retiring in 2019. Since then, I have served as an interim in Delhi and have been working on this New Faith Community since spring of 2023. I didn't plan to re-enter active ministry but, when asked, I could see God's plan.

**\* 10+ YEARS EXPERIENCE \***  
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vitalizing the multipurpose area are high on his to do list. He said he had a call from God. Hebbard said the church won't be doing the same things they did fifty years ago. His vision is now an all-inclusive one, including diverse populations of people who learn from each other as they worship. Hebbard's email is [donhebbard44@gmail.com](mailto:donhebbard44@gmail.com) and/or phone him at 607-829-8664.

Outgoing Franklin Mayor Thomas Briggs said the launch team is working from a blank slate. He wants to achieve "the true old-time religion back to the first century." He said all are welcome to express their faiths and join in with

their expressions of reverence. No one is turned away. "We are celebrating our relationship with Christ. We are all healing with the love of God."

John Wilson is returning to worship after 45 years and likes meeting others in an arena of "spiritual togetherness." He likes the spiritual journey at the Open Door Methodist Church, and that Pastor Betsy Ott is a teaching minister, not a preaching minister. He enjoys the sharing and caring community of Open Doors.

Anyone with questions or thoughts may email Pastor Ott at [revbets51@gmail.com](mailto:revbets51@gmail.com) and/or phone her at 914-584-3872.

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# FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED WORTH?

### WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

By Jan Mulroy

In his assessment of the Ouleout Creek at right, Ian Gedicks gives us an overall action plan: "The sites of erosion estimated to load the greatest amount of nutrients and sediment should be targeted for future stream restoration projects."

Outreach for these targeted sites will come from Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD).

They will work with the landowner, assessing and applying best management practices (BMPs) to remedy streambank erosion, all the while helping the landowner connect with applicable funding opportunities. DCSWCD works diligently with farmers and private landowners to develop plans and designs for stream stabilization and restoration projects while being mindful of cost effec-



The Ouleout in 2023 flood as seen from West Street Photo by Mary Burns

tiveness as well as minimizing farmer/landowner out-of-pocket costs.

For some perspective, the Ouleout Creek Watershed drainage basin is 106 square miles, representing just 1.7% of New York's portion of the Susquehanna River Watershed (6,250 square miles). Looking at total phosphorus (TP) in 2020, New York delivered 577,824 lbs. from all major sectors: Agriculture - Wastewater, Developed, Natural, Septic - averaging 92.45 lbs./yr./square mile.

In the 20-mile assessed section of the creek, from the amount of calculated eroded streambank sediment, the estimated TP at 3,900lbs./yr., would deliver

on average, 195 lbs./yr./per assessed streambank mile.

Ian Gedicks also wrote: "Several sites of erosion accounted for a disproportionate amount of the eroded material along the Ouleout".

Last December 18<sup>th</sup>, the Ouleout Creek sustained a rain event where two inches of rain fell in less than 24 hours. The photo below was taken from West Street in the Village of Franklin. Ian said of this photo: "High flow events are when the majority of erosion and deposition occur in a stream channel."

The Ouleout Creek Assessment gave us numbers to realize the creek's contribution to the Chesapeake Bay Program TMDL. It also gave us targets to mitigate those numbers.

Why do we care? Streambank erosion and high flow events in the creek have local consequences as well.

For example, the dissolved nutrients from eroded streambank sediment

can contribute to harmful algal blooms or HABs. In 2023, East Sidney Lake reported HABs to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation twice in the month of July and the beach was ultimately closed for swimming per NYS Department of Health protocols. Closing the beach to day visitors and campers alike can affect Franklin's local economy by way of purchases at local stores, restaurants, the gas station and convenience store, Farmers Market and farm stands, to name a few.

It might be advisable to learn more from DCSWCD and see what they have to offer.

### WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

By Ian Gedicks

Nutrient loading and subsequent eutrophication are a growing concern in the Chesapeake Bay. As a result, nutrient and sediment Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) were established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for the Chesapeake Bay. The TMDL limits are far reaching, affecting the Susquehanna headwaters in Delaware County, NY. In order to help achieve the TMDL, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD) received a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant from Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) to conduct a geomorphic assessment on Ouleout Creek, a tributary to the Susquehanna River.

The goal of this assessment was to estimate nutrient loading due to streambank erosion along the main stem of Ouleout Creek upstream of East Sidney Lake in Delaware County, New York. Eroding banks were geolocated during a Stream Feature Inventory and assessed using the Bank Assessment for Non-point source Consequences of Sediment (BANCS) model. Annual eroded volumes were calculated for each eroding streambank using one of two methods. The first method used a combination of field measurements and GPS points superimposed on orthoimagery in ArcGIS to determine an eroded volume of sediment. The second method used a combination of field measurements and the BANCS model to determine an eroded volume of sediment. Representative soil samples were taken from eroding stream banks and tested for total nitrogen (TN) and total phosphorus (TP) concentrations.

Nutrient loading rates were then determined for each eroding streambank. In total, 5,500 cubic yards of sediment, 11,000 lb. of TN, and 3,900 lb. of TP are estimated to erode annually from streambanks along the assessed section of Ouleout Creek. Reaches were delineated and ranked by their volume of sediment, estimated mass of TN, and estimated mass of TP eroded from the streambanks in each reach.

Several sites of erosion accounted for a disproportionate amount of the eroded material along the Ouleout. Common characteristics of these sites were the lack of an adequate riparian forest buffer along the streambank and the presence of excessive depositional features within the stream channel. The lack of a riparian forest buffer, and the stability their woody roots provide, leaves streambank soil unprotected from the erosive forces of the stream.

The excessive depositions throughout the Ouleout contribute to existing erosion by forcing streamflow into the streambanks, exacerbating erosion and subsequent sediment and nutrient loading. In addition, many of these sites are channel meanders migrating downstream. Meander migration is a natural fluvial process; however, meanders can easily become an area of instability if they erode into a field with no riparian forest buffer. Once an overly sinuous planform establishes itself, much time



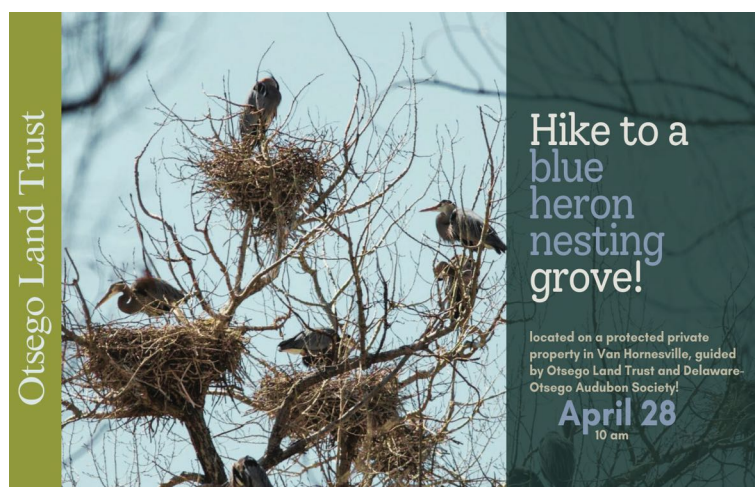
Streambank erosion along the Ouleout Creek Photo: DCSWCD

must pass and erosion must occur before the stream rights itself.

The sites of erosion estimated to load the greatest amount of nutrients and sediment should be targeted for future stream restoration projects. These sites of erosion could generally be remediated by stabilizing the eroding streambanks, resizing the channel and excessive depositional features to appropriate bankfull dimensions, and establishing an adequately sized riparian forest buffer.

It is important to note that the environmental concerns associated with streambank erosion encountered in this assessment are not unique to Ouleout Creek. If other streams throughout the region are similar in erosion characteristics, this would mean streambank erosion is a substantial contributor of nutrients and sediment throughout the Upper Susquehanna Watershed. Therefore, targeting the sites of erosion contributing the greatest amount of sediment and nutrients for remediation would have a substantial impact on improving the water quality of Ouleout Creek. It would also, in turn, benefit the Upper Susquehanna Watershed and Chesapeake Bay.

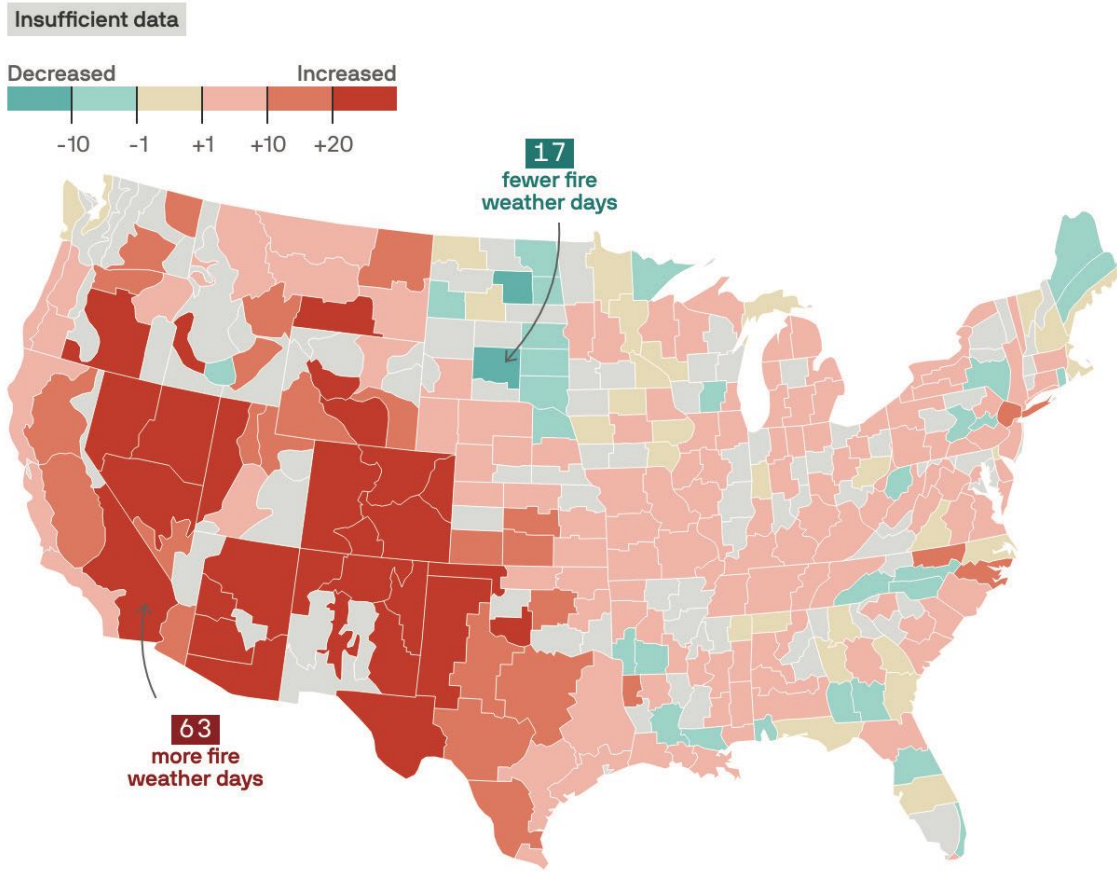
Ian Gedicks is a technician with Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District





# Change in fire weather days, 1973 to 2022

By USGS climate division; Average days per year with low relative humidity, high heat and strong winds



# BURN BAN

## Staff Report

This year, the statewide ban on residential burning of brush went into effect on Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup> and will continue for two months through Tuesday May 14<sup>th</sup>.

In New York, spring is the wildfire season, after the snow melts and the dead grasses dry-out but before the new grasses grow in to cover. Since it was introduced in 2009, this ban has reduced wildfires by almost half.

Year round, there is a statewide ban on the burning of trash. However, farms are exempted for the burning of organic agricultural wastes on the site where they are grown or generated. Nevertheless, farms are banned from the burning of pesticides, plastics, tires, or other non-organic material.

Do not endanger your life and property - and our community - and make work for our fire department.

## EXPERIENCE

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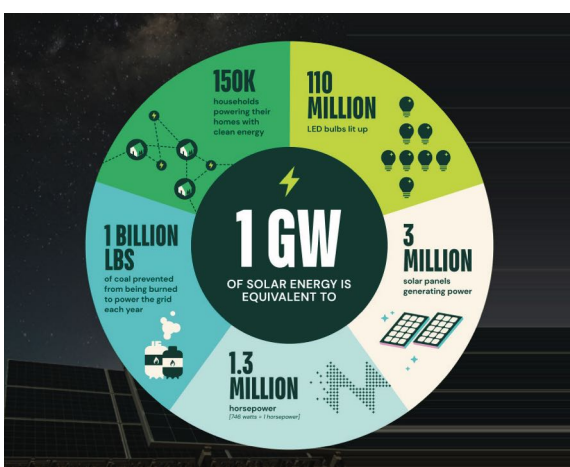
### VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

Interested in working on The New Franklin Register, but not as a writer?

We need a volunteer Circulation Manager to handle the distribution of the spring, summer and fall hard-copy issues of the newspaper.

Responsibilities include picking up fifty bundles of fifty papers each from our printer in Norwich, arranging the pre-paid EDDM postage, printing out labels for each bundle, and mailing the bundles at the Franklin, Oneonta, and Sidney Center post offices, as well as distributing loose copies to selected locations in the area.

If interested, please email the Editor at [nfr@franklinlocal.org](mailto:nfr@franklinlocal.org)



Otsego Land Trust

Help plant the Brookwood Point Garden

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10 AM - 3 PM



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education

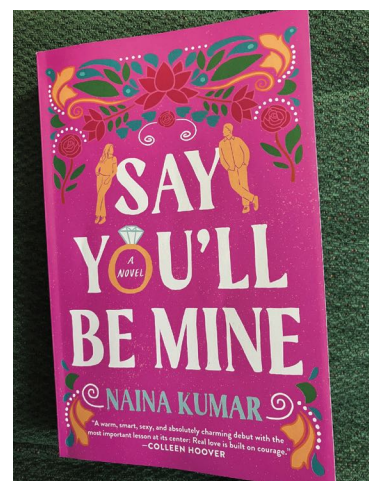
# ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

fine arts  
poetry  
holiday fun

## AT THE LIBRARY

### NEW BOOK REVIEWS

**SAY YOU'LL BE MINE**  
By Naina Kumar



Reviewed by  
**Alexis Greene**

Valentine's Day is long behind us, but romance, happily, is always with us. What begins as romance and deepens into true love is the story within Naina Kumar's enticing first novel, *Say You'll Be Mine*. As her publisher, Penguin Random House, puts it, Kumar "is a lawyer by day and a reader and writer of romance at night."

Meghna Raman teaches English at a middle school in Dallas, Texas, and is directing her students in a production of the musical *My Fair Lady*. Karthik Murthy is an engineer who lives and works in New York City.

But despite the many miles that separate them, they have something of consequence in common. Meghna is twenty-eight and unmarried, and long past the age when her Indian parents believe she should be wed. Karthik is also unmarried, and his Indian parents have been arranging for him to meet many potential brides, in the hope that he will select one and soon get married. One of these women is Meghna.

The pair pretend to be engaged, to please their families' cultural traditions and, in Meghna's case, provide a public façade when she agrees to be "the best man" at the wedding of a former boyfriend, for whom she still feels amorous.

At first, the teacher and the engineer seem to be an odd couple. Meghna is an emotionally open woman, a caring and giving person; her first impressions of Karthik are that he is uptight and "rude." As she tells her best friend, Ankita, "He was very clear that he never wants to get married." But as Meghna and Karthik spend more and more time together during their pretend engagement, they become increasingly attracted to each other. And ultimately, they fall

deeply in love. Indeed, the second half of *Say You'll Be Mine* is its most affecting, as the novel turns to how love grows, and how it changes those who fall in love, as they open themselves to sexual desire and emotional needs -- their own and each other's.

The novel's other strength is Kumar's ability to create lively and revelatory dialogue, of which there is aplenty, making *Say You'll Be Mine* primed and ready for the film adaptation that's undoubtedly in its future.

The novel could benefit, however, from descriptive passages of places and people, and from stronger characterizations of Meghna's and Karthik's friends and relatives. But *Say You'll Be Mine* is a first novel, after all, and despite these drawbacks, a pleasurable and moving read.

*Say You'll Be Mine*  
by Naina Kumar  
Copyright 2024

A Dell Trade Paperback Original

An imprint of Random House, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC  
ISBN 978-0-593-72388-3  
U.S.A. \$18.00



## UPSTATE ARTS

**ON THE VERGE** @ Bushel Collective Space and

**FORGOTTEN SPACES** @ Roxbury Arts Ctr.  
Reviewed by Valerie Cole

Two group shows opened in February in Delaware County - *On the Verge* at the Bushel Collective Space in Delhi (February 3 - March 10) and *Forgotten Spaces* (February 17 - April 13) at the Walt Meade Gallery of the Roxbury Arts Center. Both shows resulted from open calls to local artists from the incredibly vibrant arts scene in the Western Catskills.

The Bushel exhibition focused on frameworks of time in both historical and current conceptualizations, as well as seasonal and ecological approaches to time. Jeri Coppola's silver prints and neon lights piece welcomed me to this multimedia exhibit featuring films, videos, watercolor, mixed media, oil, earthenware and even a toxic



"On the Verge" at Bushel Collective Space in Delhi NY  
Left to right: works by Nathan Moser, Kailey Maher, Zachery Cummings.  
Photo: Kento Igarashi

mixture of mud and detritus. For example, the Kailey Maher piece (*Sentience of Time*) hanging from the ceiling on one thread seemed to hold time in limbo, asking the visitor to hold their breath lest they gasp too hard and shatter the fragile earthenware spiderweb orbs. Images of cityscapes and fantastic universes (Mark Strodl, *Meditation 2*, video) intermingled with delicate ephemeral watercolor flora of the region (GG Stankiewicz, *Winterberry I - III*). The rich and varied interpretations of the theme offered by the eleven artists evoked a sensation of promise and inevitability.

"The show is endless," remarked Kathleen Hayek, local artist from Walton.

*Forgotten Spaces*, at the Roxbury Arts Gallery, has a similar timeless feel. The focus in this exhibit is the effect of time on the spaces we inhabit or those that no longer exist. How have these structures, both metaphorical and literal, reflected our growth, our decay, our deaths, and our grief? Lauren Whritner's eerie soundscape invited us to find a new

See EXHIBITS, continued on Page 14

The Catskill Choral Society presents...

Carl Orff's **Carmina Burana**

With Chorus, Soloists, two pianos, and percussion  
Under the Direction of Dr. G. Roberts Kolb, Artistic Director

**Burana**

and the CCS Youth Choirs  
Under the Direction of Cynthia Donaldson

Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 7:30 pm  
Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 3:00 pm  
First United Methodist Church,  
66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY  
www.CatskillChoralSociety.com for more ...

This program, sponsored in part by Oneonta State University, is made possible through public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the New York State Office of Cultural Affairs. The Catskill Choral Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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**CARMINA BURANA**  
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Catskill Symphony Orchestra,  
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This outing is made possible by a gift  
from Tom Morgan  
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At Bushel: Left to right: works by Gayle Brown, Emily Johnston, GG Stankiewicz, Jeri Coppola, Emily Johnston.  
Photo: Kento Igarashi



# CATSKILL CATS

## MUSIC NOTES

BY JOHN O'CONNOR

### THE UNIVERSE OF YOLANDA BUSH



You don't have to go to the Blue Note in Manhattan to hear a jazz singer any more than you need to go to Buddy Guy's in Chicago to hear a woman singing the blues. Ensnared in the hills of Franklin is the inimitable Yolanda Bush, a multi-talented musician who is now playing the limited circuit of Otsego and Delaware counties with an assortment of talented support musicians.

I first heard Yolanda at the Shire Pub in Delhi, accompanied by Wyatt Ambrose, the guitarist I profiled in The New Franklin Register last spring. The pub is not the best venue to hear Yolanda sing, so when I saw that she was doing a concert in Springfield Center on a Tuesday in February, I was eager to get another chance. The concert was part of a Music Performance Trust Fund (MPTF) series celebrating Black History Month. Yolanda began the program talking about the history of African American music, starting when people from Africa were taken from their home to be sold as slaves in

America. Today's popular music would not be what it was without the great contribution of enslaved peoples and their descendants. Yolanda gave examples of the old spirituals, very often sung in the style of call and response, which later became the seeds of what we know as the blues. Continuing the program, supported by Wyatt and bassist Evan Jagels, Yolanda slipped into a bit of her jazz repertoire. I was delighted to hear her tackle Thelonious Monk's *'Round Midnight*, a complex and beautiful piece of music which she handled deftly.

When Yolanda came to my house to talk about her music, she expanded on the lyrics of *'Round Midnight*, speaking of the lyrical poetry of that pensive love song and its metaphorical reference to addiction. It was a cold sunny morning, and she sipped her tea while outside my window the

nuthatches quarreled with a bright red cardinal interrupting the snowy white of the day. What brought her to Franklin had to be my logical first question. After all, she is likely the only performing jazz singer in a 70-mile radius. Yolanda is fond of making the point of the "universe showing up" to explain the events and geography of her life. A job brought her to Franklin with her spouse, Jennifer. Cosmic coincidences led her to artistic opportunities.



YOLANDA BUSH

For example, in 2012, her employer asked rather suddenly if she would like to oversee a project in Lithuania. She took the job and soon found herself in an unfamiliar room preparing for a talk in a country

where she barely knew the language. To put herself at ease, she began to whistle a familiar blues tune. From the back of the room came an answering whistle, like a call and response between her and the universe. The whistler happened to speak English and introduced her to a musician friend named Aleksandr Belkin, who led a blues band. Before long Yolanda Bush and the Road Band were kicking butt and taking names in the Baltics (an old Lithuanian expression, I'm sure). Remarkably, Yolanda Bush can sing the blues like she was born there, an impressive contrast with her jazz chops.

Bush grew up in Chicago, often thought of as the home of the blues. She began with the trumpet at an early age, playing in school bands. She joined her high school chorus when she was fifteen. In addition, she has always had an interest in drums, today her first instrument other than her voice. She got her first shot at playing a trap set when a fight broke out between the drummer and the guitarist at a rehearsal in her basement and her father banned the drummer from the house. The drummer was thoughtful

enough to leave the drum set behind for Yolanda to fill in. The universe works in strange ways.

In her twenties she moved to San Francisco where she ended up as part of an Afro Cuban rock band, which played a lot of salsa and had a lot of percussionists. At times the beat would drift to wherever the dominant drummer happened to be, an interesting but chaotic circumstance. Eventually, Yolanda took control in order to establish a center of gravity. "Everyone follow me," she said. "I'm the mayor of Drumtown!" Sometimes you can't wait for the universe to show up.

Her day job led her to Denver and the Southside Jazz Project before ending up in Delaware County. Meeting Evan Jagels led to different size ensembles, including her five piece band, the Cool Water Collective, which will be performing at the Franklin Stage Company in August. We shared stories of playing brass in high school and marching band. We both played Sousaphone at one point. And we shared stories of events leading to unforeseen triumphs and unexpected successes. I call them coincidences. She calls them "the universe showing up." After hearing her story and her music, it's difficult not to believe in that universe.

#### DOTS, con't from Page 1

community organizations, help people with things they need, such as towing cars out of snowbanks or tutoring local school students. One important point he made was that someone should go to every town council meeting, take notes, and distribute them to the local group. All it would take is for 24 people to commit to going to one meeting a year. That seemed doable, so a group of us reached out to see if we could entice others to join this effort.

We began by naming our group Franklin Forward. Through email we let people know when the town board (TB) meetings were scheduled and started circulating notes on a google doc about what went on at the meetings, so attendees would have some background. Local citizens began to attend the TB meetings out of interest, not because they had a bone to pick with how the board was doing their job. Attending the meetings

gained popularity. After all, where else can you go to in Franklin in the evening during the winter to find other people to chat and interact with socially.

Attendees began to read up on the issues impacting Franklin, finding out about how ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds can be spent, about challenges in the Treadwell municipal water system, or needed regulations for proposed solar farms and camp grounds.

Franklin Forward rarely meets. It is more an information resource where people can find out what is going on in town. One regular TB attendee decided it would be a good idea to hold an open community conversation once a month to discuss the town board meetings as well as other town and village issues. She scheduled a meeting space at the library and has had gatherings since the late fall.

According to the notes that attendees have submitted, town board meet-

ings have become more effective of late. People feel their concerns are being addressed and their time is being respected.

Finding 24 different people who will commit to attending one monthly meeting a year is a bigger ask than expected. It is hard to get individuals to give up their time. However, attending the Franklin Town Board meetings has become one of the hottest tickets in town. People who attend one meeting tend to return. Some have made it part of their monthly routine.

I've always thought if I were ever to run for town board, one of my recommendations would be to have a coffee hour prior to the meeting where people could grab a cookie, a cup of coffee, and have time to chat with town officials and other attendees. I suspect if social time was added to town board meetings, even more people would show up. Which is exactly what organizing in a rural community is all about.

By the way, I email Mi-



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chael Moore periodically with a report from our blue dot to tell him what we're doing in Franklin. I've never gotten a response, but just knowing that there is

guidance on how to do this type of organizing and seeing the results of our local efforts is enough to make it all worth it.



## Artist's Statement: ALICIA PAGANO

I look out at the hills surrounding my home and think how fortunate I am to live here. Born in 1929, I grew up in Unadilla and after many travels have returned. Childhood years in Unadilla had a major impact on my life, and I'll always consider myself a Unadilla Girl. It was here that I learned how to live amiably in this world. During my career in formal and non-formal education, I purposely created opportunities for travel. In addition to visiting many countries, I have lived in Costa Rica, Senegal, and Germany. This travel has enriched my life.

My days 2015-17 with lymphoma have been a teacher of the importance of faith and hope for the future. I am thankful for my close family and for my many friends both near and far. I have always been a writer. I must write! So, my writings continue. Each year I create a calendar with my art and poetry. I'm working on the 2025 calendar now. The first two poems below are from *Hills Join Hands*, and the last is from *Wander Spirit*.

### The Hills

The hills join hands beneath the earth  
and circle the valley in a dance  
that holds the still point

### Observing the Mountain

I know how the mountain  
crumbles, tumbles downward  
pulling away from its former self  
Stone by stone, layer by layer  
until it's transformed  
into something new

It is no longer  
the young mountain  
rough and sharp-edged  
but a rounder, softer one  
carrying an ancient shape  
full of histories and stories.



Alicia Pagano

### The Beauty of Returning Home

The beauty of returning home  
has become an inner joy for me  
It spills over every part of me  
The satisfaction of seeing my life,  
not just as one project, one phase, one event,  
but to contemplate the full circle

To see myself as a child moving forward  
to see who I am today in the context of my life thus far  
But even more than that, to see my life,  
within the broader tapestry of my parents, grandparents  
and others who played out their lives before me  
who prepared the stage even before my entrance.

I am continuously living in the presence  
that is perfumed by the past or made richer  
with memories and new discoveries of my hometown  
and its surrounding villages.  
The place I left for many years  
and now have returned to discover anew.

- Alicia Pagano

Born June 29, 1929.

Education: MAT, Rollins College, Winter Park, FL.

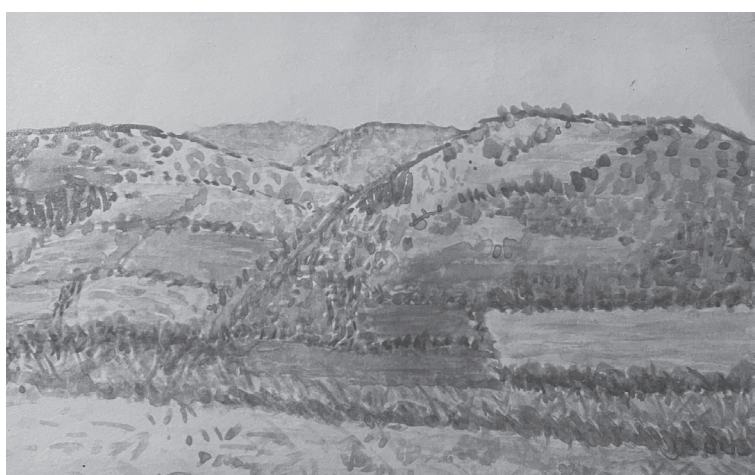
EdD, The American University, Washington, DC.

Career: Professor, Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, NY.

New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ.

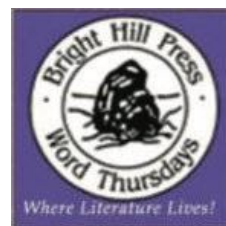
National Director of Program, Girl Scouts of the USA

Publications: 4 self-published poetry books



"Hills Viewed From My House" by Alicia Pagano. Watercolor on paper

## Bright Hill Press & Literary Center of the Catskills 2024 Programming



### Children's Workshops

Taught by Bertha Rogers

Summer I: June 24-28: The Magic of Catskill Rocks & Mountains

Summer II: July 22-26: Octopuses & Squids & Their Friends

Summer III: August 12-16: Stars and Clouds and Winds

### Adult Workshops

Taught by Georgia Popoff

Session 1: The World Beyond Haiku - Examining Japanese  
Form: June 17-July 22

Session 2: Is this a Poem? Prose poetry in All its Possibilities:  
July 29-Sept 9

No class on Labor Day

### Art Shows

May 4 - 25: *May the 4th b/u*

June 8: *Stagecoach Run* Bright Hill public opening.

August: open call: responses to *Haiku* class

### Word Thursday

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Check our Facebook for details

Email: [info@brighthillpress.org](mailto:info@brighthillpress.org)

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### See EXHIBITS, continued from Page 12

meaning in familiar landscapes. This collection included prints, fabric, oils, videos, watercolor, and stoneware.

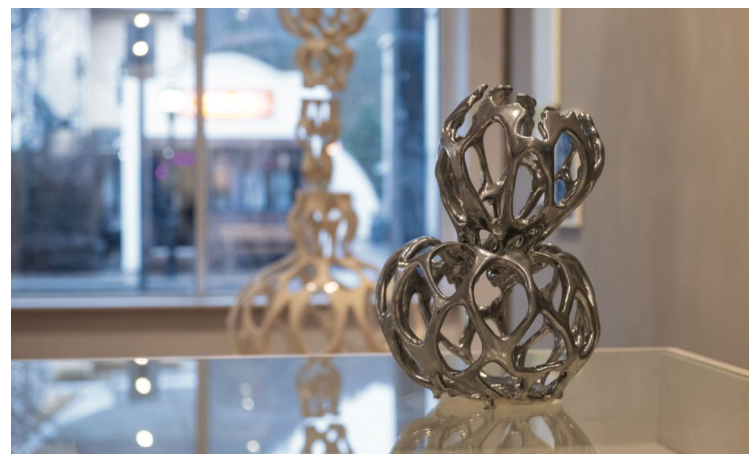
Jody Isaacson combined media in her audacious sculpture, *Aubade*, that seemed to ascend in one piece, uniting the separate components of stoneware, ribbons, inkjet on okawara, and woodcut. These different and unique materials merge to create a surprising sensation of flight.

In a nearby corner, two pieces, Joseph Damone's stark white photo, *Winter Barn*, and Tabitha Gilmore-Barnes' fibertapestry, *GRIEF*, seemed tucked away as if the curators didn't want the guests to experience the isolating sadness of spaces that have deliberately been forgotten. I moved away, looking for respite in Timothy Cleary's video, *All Visitors*. As I was guided through an empty-stalled barn to a wooded sunlit field just outside the door, the rays of the sun occasionally ob-

scured the goal, and a small bird flitted about. The exit remained out of reach. I turned to another wall. The young woman in Jessica Farrell's *Ascent (of an evening star)*, a vivid acrylic

visual, tactile, and auditory experiences that I was overwhelmed with appreciation for the opportunity to share this space and time with others from the area.

Many of the artists in



At Bushel Collective Space: Kailey Maher, *Like Calls to Like*, earthenware. Photo: Kento Igarashi.

on wood painting, looked wistfully out at the viewer: is she trying to escape the small town behind her?

It was difficult to fully embrace the atmosphere and the collective effect at the Roxbury opening because of the huge crowd of artists, fans, and well-wishers. Both exhibits were so full of

both groups are transplants from other regions of the country, most frequently the New York City area. As more and more talent migrates to the welcoming hills of the Western Catskills, we can expect more shows of this caliber.





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**Council on  
the Arts**

## FRANKLIN IN RETROSPECT

By Teddie Storey

As I put together the 2023 Scrapbook for the Franklin Railroad and Community Museum, I became aware of how much has happened in our community this past year. Here is a snapshot of activities in and around Franklin in 2023. Please visit the Museum and check out its resource library and the scrapbooks for detailed information. I encourage people to become active in some of the organizations and groups listed below. And, of course, buy local whenever possible.

New businesses came to Franklin and existing businesses expanded: Laura's Chocolates, the Good Taste Epicurean Food Market, Off Road Maple, Bobby Sharp Glass Works, Seminera Pizza, Greentree Home Candles, Yokel, The Tulip and the Rose, Polar Bear Homemade Ice Cream & More, White's Farm Supply, and local businesses, artisans, crafts people, contractors, etc. continue to be active. The weekly Franklin Farmers' Market and farm stands are great places to get local meats, produce, baked goods, dog & people treats, leather goods, and arts and crafts.

Events and talented people in the news included Lynne Kemen who published *Shoes for Lucy*, a

book of poetry. Paula Pickhardt and her son published a book of his photography. John Paul O'Connor, poet and musician, performed in and around Franklin. After a three-year hiatus, The Stagecoach Run Art Festival had a very successful return. The Franklin Railroad & Community Museum, a resource for local history and genealogy, received a tourism grant to restore lighting in its railroad car and was a stop during the antique car Catskill Conquest Rally. Joyce Collier, a Franklin native, climbed three volcanoes in Guatemala to raise awareness for kidney donations.

And, lest we forget: the annual Memorial Day parades in Franklin and Treadwell.

The Franklin Town Council proclaimed August 26<sup>th</sup> as Old Franklin Day. Once again, Connie Martin spearheaded a successful event, featuring vendors, music, food, the very successful fashion show, and was the venue for the FCS Alumni Reunion. Ms. Martin also organized the outstanding Christmas Stroll to coincide with the Annual Holiday Market. This day was made extra special by a fund raising spaghetti supper to benefit a local family.

Church fund-and-friend-raisers included the First Thursday Community Dinner at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, a turkey dinner sponsored by the Treadwell United Methodist Church, and a chicken and biscuits dinner at the Aldrich Baptist Church.

The Franklin Stage Company offered a season of entertainment with the plays "The Good People," and "Toliver & Wakeman," plus performances by A Palo Seco Flamenco Company, and Julian Fleisher with his band.

After a year of planning, fund raising and hard work, The Ouleout Valley Cemetery unveiled the newly restored historic Cemetery Fountain. Those in attendance were thrilled when the fountain was once again flowing.

Likewise, after much hard work, St. Paul's Episcopal Church debuted its beautiful restored Marklove pipe organ at the annual Hometown Christmas concert.

The Methodist community came together to reactivate its gatherings as the Open Door Methodists who, after the United Methodist Church closed its doors, met at the St. James Church, the Legion Hall, and the Bennett Funeral Home until finding a more permanent location at Wesley Hall.

The Franklin Rotary continued its important work by hosting an exchange student, road and cemetery clean ups, and participating in Old Franklin Day and other events that help unify the community.

2023 was a year of political change in local government. Donald Smith was elected Town Supervisor and Dwight Bruno (incumbent) and I were elected as Council members. Jamie Archibald was elected Superintendent of Highways and Gregg Pitula

was appointed as Code Enforcement Officer.

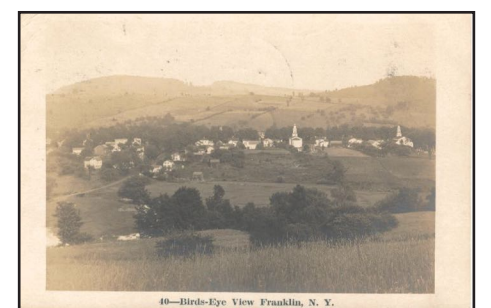
The Franklin Fire Department had an active year responding to incidents in Franklin and several area communities.

The Treadwell Water District was awarded \$80,000 of ARPA/Rescue funds to aid in the study and repair of the water system serving hamlet residents.

Franklin Central School saw a change in administration, 13 students graduated FCS with Max Meo as Salutatorian and Madeline McLaughlin as Valedictorian. Students did very well in sports activities including basketball, soccer and football, at both FCS and Unatego-Franklin. Even though sports are a team effort and no one player can be successful without the support of the team, freshman Shannon Kingsbury scored her 100<sup>th</sup> career varsity goal and Coach Laing was honored after winning his 300<sup>th</sup> career win.

The Franklin Clay Target Club had 16 active participants competing and learning the skill of trap and target shooting.

Franklin is truly a vibrant community.



40—Birds-Eye View Franklin, N. Y.





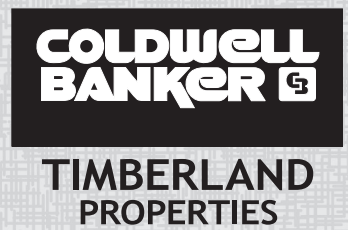
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#### PLAN, continued from Page 1

rental (STR). Today, there are dozens. Nightly fees range from \$50 to \$1,000.

Franklin's zoning code was last revised in 2006, and so does not regulate these new businesses. Last year, the Village of Franklin passed a law to limit STRs, as did neighboring Hamden. A town law to regulate STRs has been in the works here for more than a year, but recently progress has accelerated. At their March meeting, our board forwarded a draft law to the Delaware County Planning Board and the Watershed for the required Section 239 Review. The public hearing is scheduled for April.

#### Dollar General

In 2019, Dollar General of Goodlettsville TN came calling. The chain of almost 20,000 stores was looking to build yet another in Franklin. It chose a couple of acres on the south side of Rt. 357 just east of the town garages. But DG did not realize that Franklin's zoning law had an unusual setback requiring a new commercial development to be at least 1,000 feet from residences. In effect, all commercial development along the highway was excluded by this setback.

With the Downin home just across Rt. 357 from the site, Dollar General had to apply to the Zoning Board of Appeal for a variance. After a packed public hearing, our ZBA denied it. DG's second choice was at the western end of the town property. Our town board rejected

the offer to buy two acres. That location also would require a variance from the setback. After DG failed with its second proposal, supervisor Taggart invited the company to try again. With Local Law 1-2022, the town board reduced the setback to 250 feet.

#### Solar Arrays

Technical requirements for community-scale solar projects limit them to the slopes above the village where a high-voltage three-phase line comes over the hill from the Otego Substation. Two companies have tried to place arrays there. In 2022, Clear Path Energy of Brighton MA sought to lease property, but could not interest landowners. The following year, Delaware River Solar of New York NY found a willing landowner. The Bissell Road Solar Project progressed as far as submitting plans to the Franklin Code Enforcement Officer but was withdrawn over a disagreement with the landowner, Michael Miller, concerning the fate of some old-growth oaks.

When building land-based wind power was popular, the town proactively passed a 2007 law permitting wind projects. In 2009, a small windfarm was proposed for Merrickville by Horizon Wind Energy of Houston TX, although it never progressed through permitting. For solar, it took two unsuccessful attempts before the town board took action. This January, the new board passed a six-month moratorium on solar arrays. Regulations are in the works.

#### Campground

Last June, Nicholas Fernandez of Mt Kisco, Westchester County, visited the planning board to propose a campground of 35 or more units on 152 acres he intended to buy at the top of Oak Hill. He was short on details. He closed on the property in August, and by the fall, he had changed his plans to a house and four accessory buildings. In the interim, the planning board realized that the section in Franklin Zoning Law regulating tourist parks (aka campgrounds) was deleted when a law was passed to regulate trailer parks in 1981.

This year, the town board prepared regulations to fill this hole in the zoning law. At their February meeting, a draft law was discussed, then forwarded to the county for review. A public hearing was held on the final text, then Local Law 2-2024 on Vacation Campgrounds was passed by a unanimous vote.

#### Future

This new interest in commercial properties began with a revival of interest in residential properties. Houses have been selling for more than one and a half times their assessed market value. In the last six years, 490 properties in our town changed hands, almost a quarter of the parcels held by individuals.

By state law, development in our town must be guided by a comprehensive plan that represents the consensus of the community. The first plan was written in 1985 and revised in 2006, when many of the wishes of the townspeople were enacted in the revised zoning law.

Since then, as one development after another was proposed, Franklin has dealt with them as they came up. Who knows what is ahead? It would be more efficient to thoroughly revise the zoning code as guided by an updated comprehensive plan. Since the 2006 revision, almost half the taxable parcels have changed hands. The wishes of current residents might well be different.

Delaware County has never had a comprehensive plan to guide development. Recently, it received a grant for \$150K from The Appalachian Regional Commission to create one, to be matched with an equal amount from the federal American Rescue Plan Act. The director of county planning proposed meetings in every town this fall. The final plan is expected in the spring of 2025. This report should inform a new Franklin plan.

Franklin's 2006 comprehensive plan was funded by the NYS DOS Master Planning & Zoning Incentive Award Program. This time, some ARPA funds could be matched with an O'Connor Foundation grant.

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Contact Manette Berlinger  
manette.berlinger@gmail.com



**FARM, continued from Page 1**

Mary Ellen: "It wasn't hard for me. I didn't own anything. We had a funny rule of thumb: anything bigger than a guitar, it belonged to the Farm... You could have your own personal possessions, but...if you came with a car, it went to the motor pool...If somebody passed and you got an inheritance, you were expected to give it to The Farm."

Thomas: "That was the glue that held the whole thing together."

Regular Sunday services were an hour-long meditation, ending with a collective Om, after which Stephen Gaskin would preach.

Was he very charismatic?

Mary Ellen: "In a low-key way. The kind of guy who just got up and started talking. He was just smart, so smart."

Thomas Collier nods. "He just spoke truth."

Mary Ellen's connection with The Farm began with finding Ina May Gaskin's book, *Spiritual Midwifery*, in her local library.

"I was pregnant with my boyfriend's kid, but he'd turned abusive, someone it wouldn't be good to raise a child with, so I moved back to my parents' house in Long Island. I was seven months pregnant, but I didn't want a hospital birth...I wanted more control over it."

Spiritual midwifery was central to The Farm in Tennessee and seemed to offer a solution: "Hey, ladies! Don't have an abortion, come to The Farm and we'll deliver your baby and take care of it, and if you ever decide you want it back, you can have it."

Mary Ellen wrote to Ina May and was invited to come. She had her daughter Tessa there, then became a member and stayed for three years. Thomas came to The Farm around the same time, but with over a thousand residents, they didn't meet till later.



1982: Thomas Collier meditating in a meadow. Chuck Haupt Photos

The Farm had a charitable branch called Plenty (still active today as Plenty International), formed to help after a devastating earthquake in Guatemala. In 1978, Plenty moved a group of Farm folks into an abandoned apartment building on East 167<sup>th</sup> Street in the South Bronx,

then a famously rough neighborhood and critically underserved by the city. As squatters, they renovated the building, "and the city was glad to see it." Plenty ran EMT training courses there and operated an ambulance service in an area where there had been none. Mary Ellen moved to the South Bronx in January of 1979 and there she met Thomas.

Thomas learned of The Farm from a friend who'd followed Stephen Gaskin's caravan. He was from Jacksonville, Florida and ready for an alternative lifestyle. The community's main source of income came from construction work, and Thomas arrived with those very skills. "I had all my hand tools with me... Immediately went to work on the carpentry crew, building the school...I was young and single and strong and needed. Same thing up here: I came up here and they wouldn't let me leave."

He laughs. "One of the first days, I had my pouch on, my hammer and stuff. Kid walks up, he says,



Tessa Dawn Collier, 6, helps with the dishes. Chuck Haupt Photos



Farm members gather in front of 'New Wave', The Farm's largest house. Photo by Chuck Haupt

'What's that made of?' 'Well...leather.' 'Man, we don't wear leather on The Farm!' And I'm like: Busted! But I didn't know! Next day, I just had a cloth apron."

Primo Construction, a familiar name in Franklin, sponsored and renovated the South Bronx center. Thomas also recalled a job replacing windows in skyscrapers.

"Eighteen windows in the back of a station wagon! And 'cuz it was a car, you couldn't park it anywhere!"

Later, among many other projects, Primo built some of the barns at the Walton fairgrounds.

Thomas and Mary Ellen went back to Tennessee in 1980, got married, had a second daughter, then moved to Franklin in January of 1981.

The Farm's Franklin "satellite" was a 340-acre former sheep farm "way up the end of the hollow, pretty isolated," bought in 1975 from John Campbell, Sr., by Syracuse University students wanting to follow a collective living model. They had visited The Farm in Tennessee, but it wasn't taking new members.

In a 2014 *The Daily Star* article, local historian Mark Simonson quoted the group's 25-year-old spokesman, Martin Goldberg: "We believe in God and that all people are the same... We don't use drugs, or stimulants, we don't even drink coffee... We're into getting married, working hard... you won't find any orgies

or wife-swapping here. We're so straight, it's ridiculous."

So much for sex and drugs.

Part of the Franklin farm's mission was to provide emotional support for the South Bronx group. "So people could get out of the city and come up here for weekends."

Mary Ellen recalls, "But it was really cold. There was a lot of snow!"

Thomas chimes in: "Lots of firewood! That winter went down to 25 below!"

The housing included two trailers, a small existing farm building, a large old barn, and a three-story house built after the purchase. Multiple families lived in each building.

Mary Ellen: "When we first got there, we were living with another couple. We each had a bedroom, all our kids shared a kid room... The trailers weren't very well insulated... but the Big House was nicely built. It's still standing up there."

Eventually, there were fifteen to twenty families, spread out. Each dwelling had its own kitchen, but the big house had a communal kitchen and a soy dairy for making tofu. In keeping with the vegan lifestyle, no animals were kept, "apart from a couple of dogs and whatever cats showed up. We had a horse and a pony for a while, too."

Thomas: "That kind of follows the Buddhist precepts of, y'know, do no harm."

Mary Ellen: "We bought beans in bulk... we made all our own bread... and grew as many vegetables as we could. The Farms were supported by people working off the Farm, so Thomas and most of the men operated Primo Construction... the women and children stayed on the farm, gardening, housekeeping, kid care, and homeschooling the kids... I was very comfortable living in groups. I loved having women friends all around."



Primo Construction built barns and other buildings, providing income for The Farm

Thomas says, "My highpoint was getting married, that wedding we shared with two other couples. The wedding cakes consisted of eleven sheet cakes!"

In 1983, the property was sold to the mega-developer Patten Realty, to be divided into 42 five-acre lots. The Franklin Farm disbanded.

(To be continued...)

Part II, in the NFR's summer issue, will detail the causes of the Franklin Farm's demise.

## Nichols Pond Insurance Agency

JOHN NICHOLS, CPCU, LUTCF, ARe, CISR  
121 Delaware Street  
Walton, NY 13856-0210

pcinsurance@frontiernet.net

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# RECENT REAL PROPERTY SALES IN THE TOWN OF FRANKLIN

DATE	ADDRESS	ACRES	TYPE	ASSESS.	SALE	SELLER	BUYER
08/30/23	10348 State Hwy 357	0.66	1 Family Res	80,000	1	Winkler, Anthony F	Young, Cass E
09/01/23	Beebe Rd	38.00	Rural vac>10	Split	38,000	Daub, Leslie A	Sibug, Lourdes L
09/07/23	1870 Carey Rd	10.57	Rural res	Split	400,000	Jacobs, Robert	Bollinger, Robert
09/07/23	Carey Rd	242.84	Rural vac>10	Split	800,000	Jacobs, Robert	Bollinger, Robert
09/12/23	994 State Hwy 28 S	9.60	1 Family Res	114,000	130,000	Lynch (Estate), Roger P	Armstrong, Erica
09/13/23	9023 State Hwy 357	1.25	1 Family Res	150,000	80,000	Edwards, Crystal	Lobdell, Carlton E (R)
09/18/23	Case Hill Rd	40.63	Rural Vac>10	76,000	104,000	Sure Wood Forests Inc,	Wallace, Robert W
09/26/23	Jackson Hill Rd	30.50	Seasonal Res	100,000	35,000	Dzamko, Emma	Natilli, Michael Jr
09/28/23	Dunk Hill Rd	9.04	Rural Vac<10	25,000	43,500	Pierre-Louis, Sigismond R	Razukiewicz, John J
09/29/23	384 Van Tassell Rd	1.00	Mfg Housing	20,000	5,000	Campbell, James Gaylord	Beach, Dale M Sr (R)
10/16/23	9143 State Hwy 357	5.10	1 Family Res	110,000	139,000	Dunker, Roberta	Aedo, Sara Maria
10/19/23	515 Main St	0.37	1 Family Res	131,000	168,000	Methodist Church Prop.	Valeriano, Veronica
10/20/23	West Platner Brook Rd	11.05	Rural Vac>10	28,000	30,000	Bonventre, Francesco	Ardolic, Brahim
10/26/23	Russell Rd	9.75	Rural Vac<10	26,000	13,000	Community LD LLC,	Right Time Properties LLC
10/26/23	9635 State Hwy 357	3.00	1 Family Res	500,000	565,000	Batson, Mathew A	Van Saun, Phillip
10/27/23	7423 County Hwy 16	2.30	1 Family Res	155,000	299,500	Archibald, Bruce J	Scherne, John
10/27/23	604 State Hwy 28 S	4.54	1 Family Res	110,000	155,500	Spohrer, Joseph M	Tavarez, Maria F
10/30/23	44 Maple St	0.28	1 Family Res	136,000	305,000	Fink, Carolyn	Noth, Michael Parr
11/16/23	Franklin Heights Rd (5)	73.80	Berry	477,000	2,090,000	Northstar Blueberry Farm	North Star Farm LLC (B)
11/19/23	946 ThoroughbredRd (2)	30.42	Rural Res	Inc. Hamden	309,140	Schwark, Andrea Lynn	Schwark, Andrea (R)
11/21/23	63 Rod & Gun Club Rd	0.64	Mfg Housing	47,000	79,900	Cornwell, William	Mason, Herbert
11/24/23	410 Otego Rd	7.80	1 Family Res	141,000	300,000	Donnell, Kathleen C	Lange, Dacia A
11/27/23	Ed Klug Rd	10.27	Rural Vac>10	42,000	67,000	Krukowski, Mark	Kiley, Terry
11/29/23	131 Jackson Hill Rd	1.00	1 Family Res	120,000	224,000	Kostova, Anna	Missal, Karen
11/30/23	Van Tassell Rd	19.00	Rural Vac>10	Split	25,000	Santoro, Angelo	Crowe, Patrick
12/04/23	1096 Finch Rd (2)	313.60	Rural Res	850,000	950,000	Berritto Enterprises LLC,	Rogowski, Maciej
12/05/23	1072 Fleming Rd	18.10	Rural Res	146,000	365,000	Lake, Jarol	Kasnyik, Anna
12/06/23	1870 Carey Rd	20.00	Rural Vac>10	Split	70,000	Jacobs, Robert	Bollinger, Robert
12/27/23	7683 State Hwy 357	3.20	1 Family Res	116,000	167,750	Zahar, Kathryn A	Chursina, Daria
12/29/23	699 Post Rd	31.00	Rural Res	183,000	409,000	Diane DeFalco Trust,	Vaccarella, Roberto
01/03/24	12786 State Hwy 357	1.59	Mfg Housing	63,000	12,000	Yow, Christy	Archibald, Jamie D
01/22/24	4486 County Hwy 14	0.57	1 Family Res	140,000	304,000	Matusick, George	Packer, Lindsay R
01/31/24	36 West St	0.44	3 Family Res	112,000	120,000	Kozlow, Betty	Downin, Chris

(#) Number of parcels

(R) Relatives

(B) Inc. business

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**FRANKLIN FARMERS' MARKET**

**18th Year**

**Opening Day May 26th**

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**Lawn of Chapel Hall**

**Institute Street, Village of Franklin**

**Music by Bill Steely**

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TIMES UNION

**ECLIPSE VIEWING TIMES**

Total solar eclipse viewing times for  
New York locations on April 8, 2024

CITY	TOTALITY	DURATION
BUFFALO	3:18 P.M.	3 MIN., 48 SEC.
ROCHESTER	3:20 P.M.	3 MIN., 41 SEC.
WATERTOWN	3:22 P.M.	3 MIN., 40 SEC.
FORT DRUM	3:22 P.M.	3 MIN., 38 SEC.
SYRACUSE	3:23 P.M.	1 MIN., 30 SEC.
TUPPER LAKE	3:24 P.M.	3 MIN., 32 SEC.
SARANAC LAKE	3:24 P.M.	3 MIN., 31 SEC.
ROME	3:24 P.M.	30 SEC.
LAKE PLACID	3:25 P.M.	3 MIN., 16 SEC.
PLATTSBURGH	3:25 P.M.	3 MIN., 36 SEC.
SCHROON LAKE	3:26 P.M.	1 MIN., 11 SEC.

SOURCE: NASA'S SCIENTIFIC VISUALIZATION STUDIO

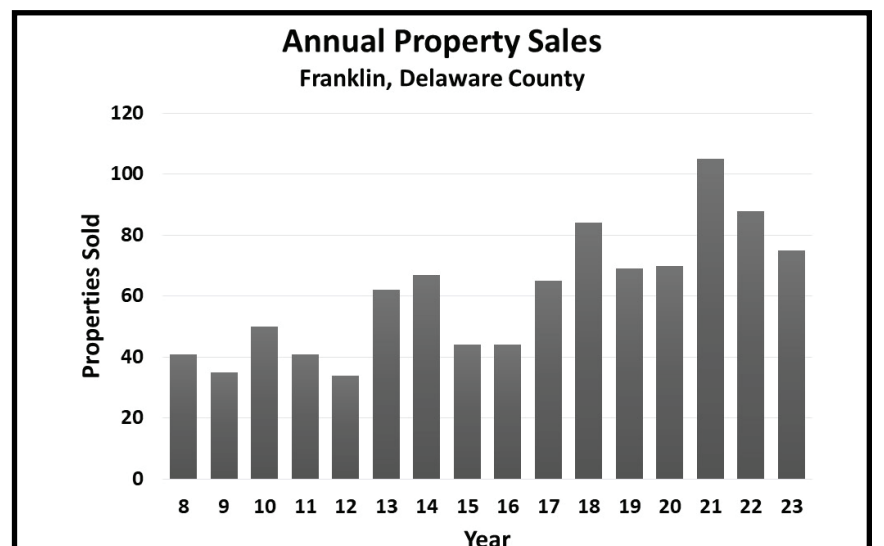
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### Your Neighbor's View, "Chaos," continued from Page 2:

form of government:

"[W]e may define a republic to be... a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is ESSENTIAL to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it; . . . It is SUFFICIENT for such a government that the persons administering it be appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the people; and that they hold their appointments by either of the tenures just specified."

Notice the specific reference to deriving all governmental powers from a great body of the society, not a small proportion or a favored class. This implies majority rule. Also note the reference to holding their positions for a given time or during good behavior. I take that to mean term limits and not misusing the power of an

elected office.

Today our elected officials are career politicians; they spend as much effort getting reelected as governing; they answer to large donors and lobbyists rather than listening to their constituents; they are more interested in staying in office than serving the people; they blindly follow partisan politics rather than seeking common ground and compromises which would benefit the people.

I do not have any magic formula or sage advice on reversing this trend. I believe it does start at the local level, and each person will have a part in the solution. We can work to stop the chaos. We can begin by listening to each other and discussing issues – not shouting at each other. Who knows? We might even find common ground - our founding fathers would call it compromise.

Don Hebbard  
Franklin NY

To the Editor:

Thank you for the local news piece in the Fall 2023 edition.

I subscribe to the Marion County Record. At the time they were raided, they had 4,000 subscribers. When I subscribed, they had over 10,000. I'm sure it's more now. Keeping up with the investigation of the raid is important.

Do you mail copies of The Franklin Register?

Best wishes!  
Frances Ruth Harris  
Bainbridge, NY

*Editor's note: further communication with Ms. Harris revealed her experience as a journalist, which led to our invitation to write for the NFR. You will find her first piece in this issue.*



A street sign in Friendship, Maine

**JANICE SMITH** of Franklin (front center) was named the Golden Cow Award winner, presented by the American Dairy Association North East at the recent 2024 New York State Ambassador competition. She is joined by the Delaware County Dairy Promotion Committee and family members.

The Golden Cow Award recognizes outstanding service and dedication to local dairy promotion in New York State. Smith has served her county promotion committee for more than four decades, encouraging youth to become a part of the program and developing life-long dairy advocates.

(Courtesy of the American Dairy Association)



The Newsletter of Franklin Local

#### Editorial Board

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Editor  
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### HAVE AN OPINION? WRITE TO US!

At: The New Franklin Register

P.O. Box 258

Franklin, NY 13775

or by email: [nfr@franklinlocal.org](mailto:nfr@franklinlocal.org)

### What are we about?

Franklin Local Ltd, the parent organization for The New Franklin Register and of the Franklin Farmers' Market, is a not-for-profit corporation made up of Franklin residents.

Our mission statement: to work to preserve the rural character of Franklin, to build the local economy, to encourage volunteerism, and to raise awareness of economic and social challenges that may result from climate change and the transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy.

We have a number of projects that we hope to move from idea to action:

- Local food production network
- Skills and services exchange
- Goods exchange
- Ride sharing bulletin board and/or website
- Farm to School Program for school lunches
- Community Greenhouses
- Community Energy Production
- Community Health Network

Together, let us imagine a more energy efficient, healthier habit of living, and put it to work here in Franklin, for a brighter, more sustainable future.

### PLEASE JOIN US!

**For meeting times, location and directions, as well as lots of other information about our town, check our website:**

[franklinlocal.org](http://franklinlocal.org)

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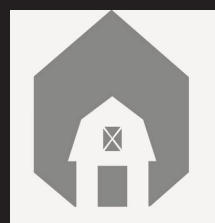






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