



NEWS FROM *South Williamstown*

Contents

- Repair Café on 4/22..... 1
- Bird Walk on 5/20..... 1
- SWCA Scholarships 4
- Historical Society.....2
- Waubeeka Golf News 2
- Williamstown Financial Analysis3
- Bernady's Greenhouse 5
- Snippets of news6

Bird Walk at Caretaker Farm on Saturday, May 20

Join Williamstown Rural Land Foundation's Leslie Reed-Evans on Saturday May 20 at 7:30 a.m. at Caretaker Farm, 1210 Hancock Road, to hear, see and learn about the birds of the fields, woods and shrub land of the farm. Beginners are welcome. Please bring binoculars if you have them.

For more information contact Leslie at 458-2494 or email lre@wrlf.org. Heavy rain cancels and there will be refreshments.

Celebrate Earth Day with us at our Repair Café at Sheep Hill on Saturday, April 22, 1 TO 4:00 P.M.



Come all ye broken lamps, socks with holes, blades that have seen sharper days, bicycles needing a little tenderness!

Come to Repair Café, co-sponsored by the South Williamstown Community Association and the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, at Sheep Hill, Saturday afternoon, April 22nd from 1 to 4:00 p.m

Volunteer "fixers" will offer repairs on lamps, small electrical appliances, wooden items and bicycles, as well as mending, darning and sharpening. We're also offering advice from a lawyer, computer people, a genealogist, an expert knitter, a gardener and a specialist in Berkshire County elder services.

There'll be refreshments, too. You can make a donation if you wish, but it is all free. What better way to celebrate Earth Day!

If you are willing to be a volunteer "fixer," please call Bette Craig at (413) 458-5257 or email swca32@gmail.com.

SWCA Scholarships

By Karen Charbonneau

The South Williamstown Community Association will support two scholarships of \$750 each to benefit two children from South Williamstown in need of tutoring. Williamstown's Reading Institute will administer the scholarships and provide reading support, from a certified reading teacher, twice a week, for eight weeks this summer. SWCA hopes to continue the scholarships by raising dedicated funds in the future.

News From South Williamstown

March 2017

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Email suggestions or
articles to
swca32@gmail.com.

Find SWCA on Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/
South-Williamstown-Community-
Association-1684158335160201/](https://www.facebook.com/South-Williamstown-Community-Association-1684158335160201/)

The Williamstown Historical Museum at the South Center School To Be Up and Running by Mid-April

*By Sarah Currie,
Executive Director*

The WHM is close to completing the move to the South Center School. The research room should be up and running by mid-April and a grand opening celebration is being planned for a weekend in late June. Please stay posted for more details and we look forward to seeing you soon. The WHM has kicked off a Capital Campaign to support the renovation projects which are transforming the school into a museum, research facility and archive and we hope you will contribute to our effort to create a history center the town will be deeply proud of. Please make a contribution today! Checks may be mailed to the Williamstown Historical Museum, 32 New Ashford Road, Williamstown, or you may make a donation online at: <http://www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org/membership-2/join-us/>. We are so grateful for your support! Please contact Sarah with questions or if you have a pressing need for research: 413-458-2160.

Waubeeka Golf Links News

By Michael Deep

Most important to the neighbors is we have hired back Mark Mills as our chef. Mark was the face of Waubeeka for 20 years before I purchased it. Our entire staff is so happy that Mark has come back home. The South Williamstown Community can visit us daily for lunch, his great dinners and the specials he will run on occasions. Oh yes, Friday night dinners will also be back. Mark will open the restaurant in late March.

Bill Leonard, one of our long time grounds employees, attended the Invasive Species workshop held by SWCA at Sheep Hill with Williams Professor Hank Art. He passed on some very helpful information and is helping implement a program with our Superintendent Brian Bartlett.

Superintendent Bartlett has done a lot of work this winter at the golf course to get ready for the 2017 season. We have a brand new tee on hole #7 as well as new drainage near our 8th green. The mild winter has made us optimistic about opening a little early this season. At the very least we want to open the driving range early!

Myself, I have been working diligently on making Waubeeka a first class destination resort for our community. Happily, our consultant has given us positive feedback and shortly we will be going out to the market. There has been no change whatsoever in our vision. We still want to build a beautiful resort that our historic community can be very proud of and keep Waubeeka as a golf course for the enjoyment of future generations! This does not mean we have a done deal, but it does mean that we are re-invigorated and still in search of a reputable partner with not only the same vision we presented to the town, but also \$50 million!

Town of Williamstown Financial Analysis: How do we pay for emergency services?

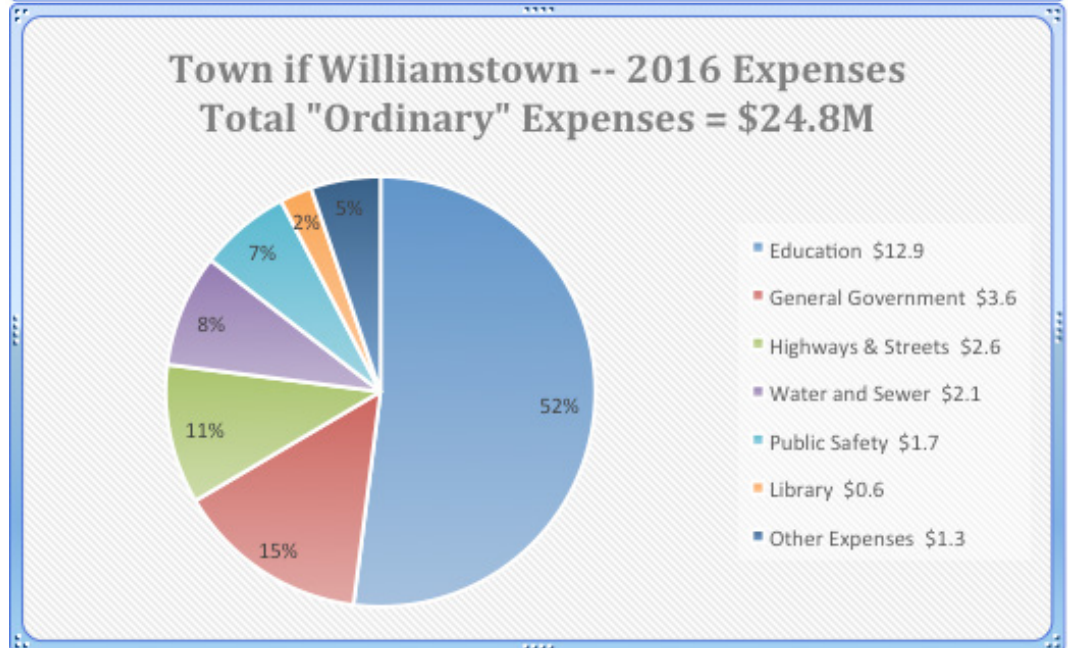
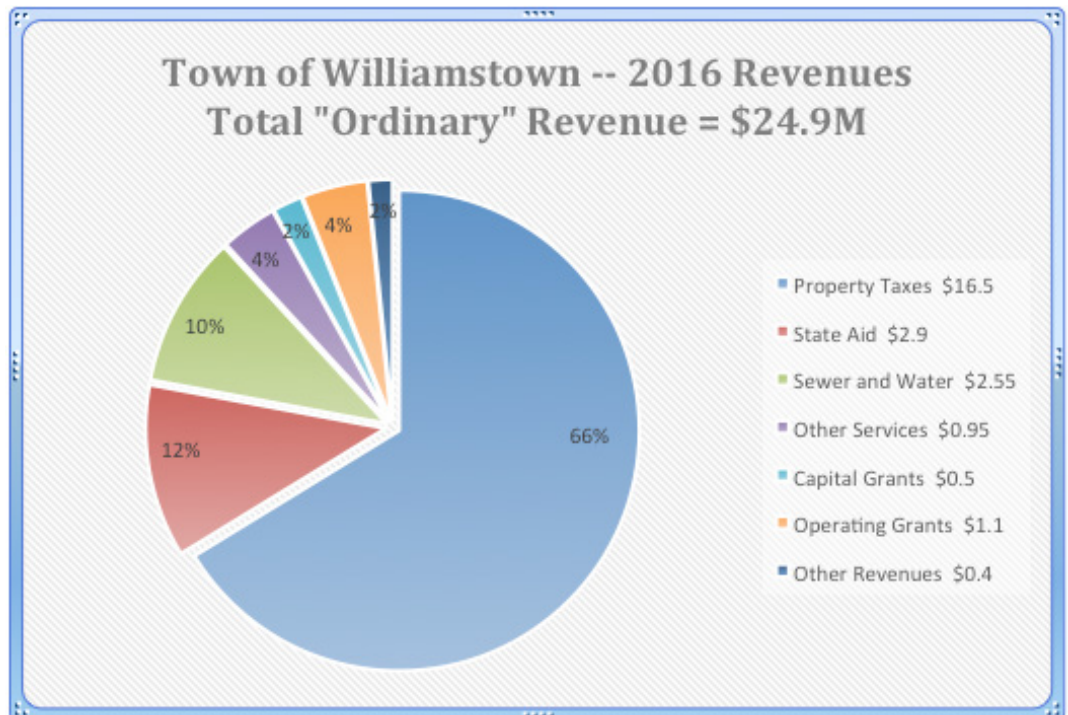
By Melissa Cragg

Greetings! This little piece began with a misunderstanding on my part: at last fall’s potluck I sat for a time with then-new Town Manager Jason Hoch and Sherwood Guernsey. We were talking about emergency services generally, police, fire, and ambulance. The misunderstanding, entirely my own, had to do with fire protection—but more on that in a moment. This little conversation led to more conversations, research and aha! I think I get it! I thought I would write this little piece for you so that number-oriented people out there can get it, too.

It always helps me to place things in some context. I stepped way back and pulled out two things—last year’s Town of Williamstown Annual Report: 2015 from the May Town Meeting and the town’s June 30, 2016 Audited Financial Statements. There is a wealth of information in these documents and I learned a lot. Some interesting random numbers—in 2015, there were 1,050 students attending our public schools, the town received almost \$850,000 in proceeds from the state lottery, and the town carries an extremely strong AA1 credit rating from Moody’s Investors Services. The police dispatch section received 24,279 calls; of these, 14,523 (almost 40 per day) were “referred for service” to various departments, but mostly to police, fire, or ambulance.

The audited financial statements for the fiscal years ended June 30, 2015 and 2016 include revenue associated with the considerable work related to The Spruces and the Highland Woods affordable housing project. Since I was interested in what the town’s regular and recurring financial condition is without these large non-recurring projects, I came up with the following charts:

“Ordinary” revenues and expenses are balanced at



about \$25 million. Not surprisingly, two-thirds of the revenue is from property taxes. I was surprised that the percentage wasn't higher. Further, the town has an unused levy capacity (the amount taxes could be raised without an override vote) of over \$1 million, meaning the town has budget flexibility. Also not surprisingly, the largest expense in the town's budget is education.

Now this brings me to emergency services. Included in the expense pie chart is Public Safety, \$1.7 million. This includes police and dispatch. A complete report of their activities can be found on pages 83-98 of the Town's 2015 Annual Report. Aside from charging 130 people with 512 crimes (including 151 traffic offenses), I was surprised to see the thousands of requests to check buildings and suspicious vehicles and "activity." I'm from Detroit. I'm not accustomed to even thinking of police as a resource to put my mind at rest!

Note what ISN'T included in the pie chart—fire and ambulance. Remember at the beginning of this piece I mentioned a misunderstanding? What I initially misunderstood was fire protection. While the town has no "fire department," it does have a "fire prudential," sometimes referred to as a fire district. Beginning on page 161 of the Town's Annual Report is a report of the Prudential Committee, a thorough and sometimes colorful piece. The Prudential has a three member board and its own tax levy which is paid by Williamstown taxpayers on their regular tax bills. Last year, the prudential collected \$575,000; 93% of this came from taxpayers with the balance coming from Williams College and various inspection fees. Operating expenses, equipment, and additions to its stabilization reserve totaled \$537,000, a balanced budget. The fire district responded to 259 calls in 2015.

That brings me to ambulance. Last fall I received many requests for charitable donations from worthy area charities. The only one that actually surprised me, though, was the request from Village Ambulance Services. Village is a nonprofit company whose budget has been funded by payments from individuals and insurance companies for both emergency and scheduled medical transport. Insurance company and patient payments together with donations have traditionally been sufficient to fund the ambulance company's \$1.8 million annual budget. However, changes in insurance payment practices (they pay slower and at lower levels), increases in patient co-pays and deductibles (which are more difficult to collect), and a greater distance travelled to transport emergencies to Pittsfield or Bennington have resulted in a \$500,000 deficit at Village Ambulance for 2016 alone. Clearly this is unsustainable. Equally clear is that townspeople need ambulance services. The Williamstown Police Department's dispatch report (page 85 of Annual Report) shows 1,808 ambulance calls (almost five per day) for Williamstown (1,601), Hancock, New Ashford, Pownal, and mutual aid to other area communities. Additionally, 1,215 ambulance transfers were reported.

Win Stuebner is President of the Board of Directors of Village Ambulance. He recently laid out the financial problems of the company at the town's Finance Committee, pointing out, too, that this problem is not peculiar to our town. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, a working group was quickly formed consisting of people from the ambulance company, the Town, the College and the Fire District. Win explains that, "A number of possible solutions have been identified that could permanently ensure Village's viability. The group is currently gathering information before deciding which possibilities to explore further. How long this will take is unknown and a formal structure may not be ready to present to the Town Meeting in May—as much as we would like to. That said, until a permanent structure is arrived at, I am confident that the service we provide will continue as always."

I think we're lucky to live in a town as well managed as this one. We should expect to hear more soon on the ambulance situation but I was greatly reassured to hear of the quick reaction and the thorough, thoughtful approach taken.

The Annual Town Meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 at 7:00 PM at the Williamstown Elementary School.

Bernardy's Greenhouse

By Susan Bernardy

My mother-in-law Mary Bernardy had always loved plants, especially African violets and wax begonias. Her husband, Andrew Bernardy, Sr., planted a large vegetable garden each year and enjoyed sharing his produce with family and friends. They both dreamed of operating a greenhouse.

Their dream became a reality at the family home on Oblong Road with the opening of Bernardy's Greenhouse on Easter Sunday 1969. At that time it was the only greenhouse operating in Williamstown. Their son, Andrew Jr., had worked the summer of 1968 putting hundreds of panes of glass into the frame of the main greenhouse. A furnace assured a production start as early as March 1. Geranium, ivy geranium and vinca cuttings were purchased wholesale near Boston, but all other flowers and vegetables for many years were seeded and transplanted on site.

A 1970 price sheet listed tomatoes at \$1.00 (except Big Boy hybrids at \$1.25). Peppers, broccoli and cabbage were 75 cents, and all flats contained a dozen plants! Peat moss pots of cucumber and squash were 40 cents, with each containing three or four plants. Petunias were \$1.00 per dozen and most other bedding plants were 75 cents per dozen.

It was a family affair with Mary, Andrew Sr. and Andrew Jr. working with plants and waiting on customers when not working at the family restaurant on Water Street across from Cable Mills. I worked full time in the greenhouse seeding, transplanting and watering. Andrew Jr. mixed the hundreds of yards of soil needed each year from the byproduct of the dairy cattle that had been raised on the farm, and later from the calves and chickens. He mixed the manure with sand, vermiculite and peat moss, all sifted by hand.

Memorial Day arrangements were potted up for sale and many customers brought their own cemetery pots for planting. Some would spend hours looking over the plants and choosing special plants to decorate their loved ones' graves. For many years, we supplied numerous local businesses with their plantings and donated the plants and labor for the beds and pots that adorned the Williamstown Theater Festival.

The business grew steadily. In 1982 a new 27x48 foot plastic-covered hoop house was erected. Three generations now worked to make the business a success. Sales in 1985 generated the highest gross income, but from 1985 on, Bernardy's Greenhouse ran up against stiff competition from supermarkets, gas stations, hardware

stores and large retail outfits such as K-Mart. The larger outlets' prices were often lower and they sometimes stocked a larger variety of plants. And then there was the convenience of picking up plants at the same place where you did your other shopping.

In 1993, Bernardy's Greenhouse closed its retail outlet, but continued to supply a few commercial customers and local residents with custom plantings until 2013. It was a wonderful experience shared by three generations of the Bernardy family. Sometimes still people approach me to say, "I remember coming to the greenhouse in the spring." And, they'll say how much they enjoyed choosing their plants and filling their cemetery pots.



Mary and Andrew Bernardy Sr. with grandchildren Andrew III, Wendy and Maribeth

Snippets of News about South Williamstown

- Norman Sweet, Jr. died at home on Sloan Road on December 30th at the age of 85.
- Andy and Anne Hogeland have welcomed their first grandchild. Andrew Gabriel Serna was born in Anchorage, Alaska on February 7th to parents Emily Hogeland and Matt Serna. Baby and mom are both doing great!
- Angela Cardinali says, "Should you have family, friends or colleagues visiting the area who would like a hotel/B&B alternative, Thimble Cottage on Green River Road is now available. Here is a link to the airbnb listing: <https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/15285007?s=5GGPKAyA>
- Celine Lielle, who moved to Williamstown a year ago from California, is the new tenant in the Second Congregational Church parsonage.
- Market Manager Anne Hogeland says the Williamstown Farmers' Market is set to open on Saturday, May 20, and will be open weekly from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- Save the date for the Second Congregational Church's Strawberry Festival, June 17, 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.
- Nadia Dole and Julia Morgan are offering a creative workshop in Provenance in May. Go to <http://www.thehillworkshops.com> and click on Luminous Passages for more information.
- Public is invited to following events at Sweetwood Retirement Community, 1611 Cold spring Road:
 - April 4 and April 11 at 3 p.m. - Phil McKnight will lecture on Shakespeare and the Law
 - April 5 at 4 p.m. - Piano Recital by Josh Wien
 - May 9 at 4 p.m. - Michael Perry will talk on The White Mountains
 - June 4 at 11 a.m.-1 p.m. - Otha Day will host piano/drum recital