

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Vol. 17, No. 2 BallardVale, Massachusetts Fall/Winter 2020

Senior Center Keeps Busy in the Vale

Even the pandemic hasn't stopped a flurry of activity in our little section of town. Just up the street from the multimillion dollar firehouse (see accompanying story) being built, vital services and interesting programs are available to Andover seniors at the Ballard Vale United Church at 23 Clark Road, where the Reverend Adam Isbitsky is the designated term pastor.

Since last November, the United Church has been the temporary home of the Andover Senior Center. It will continue to operate there until the newly renovated \$6 million Robb Center opens next spring near the Town Offices downtown.

"Being in Ballardvale has worked out well," said Jane Burns, the town's director of Elder Services. "The Church has been very accommodating, and we're pleased to be in this part of town."



Director of Elder Services Jane Burns at the temporary senior center hosted by Ballard Vale United Church

Burns, who took over as director of elder services in January, didn't have much time to get acclimated when the pandemic hit. But she is proud of the fact that the Center and her staff have never stopped providing meals and programs.

The Andover Senior Center has always provided Meals on Wheels with the help of dedicated volunteers, and since January, Burns said, nutritional lunches have

expanded and the program size has doubled. Residents who can pay are asked for a donation. The Center staff has been answering the phones and assisting residents throughout the pandemic.

The Center has also been offering services by appointment and programming like fitness classes outside and on Zoom. For safety reasons, indoor in-person classes are limited to the number of seniors who are permitted in the church, but classes are also available to an unlimited number of at-home participants thanks to a partnership with Andover community access TV.

In addition, the Senior Center is offering occasional history lectures at Clark Road and on Andover TV this fall and winter. "I'm a history buff and Ballardvale is a very historic part of town," Burns said. "I'm hopeful that we can work with the BallardVale Historic District Commission, the History and Culture Center, and other town resources to participate in our lecture series."

"We couldn't be happier that we succeeded in finding a new, temporary home at Ballard Vale United Church," Jemma Lambert, director of Community Services, told the *Eagle-Tribune* last winter. "The church offers 6,030 square feet of space, including a large activity room, numerous smaller rooms, 47 parking spaces, comfortable handicap-accessible activity space, and a commercial kitchen. It's the perfect place for us to call home while the Senior Center is being renovated." For more information about Andover Elder Services, visit andoverma.gov

Feedback? Suggestions? Ideas for stories?

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Fire Station Update

Look for the new Ballardvale Fire Station to be answering calls this spring. The project is going “extremely well,” according to Deputy Town Manager Michael Lindstrom, with construction on track for an April opening. He reports that the structural steel, exterior metal framing, and roof are all in place, with masonry and interior framing well underway. “The building should be weather-tight with roof and windows installed by early November,” he said.



The purchase and demolition of the adjacent condemned property at 157 Andover Street, as approved at the September town meeting, will provide additional parking spaces for the fire station and playground. (The BVHDC must also approve the demolition of this house, which was built in 1848.)



The current fire station will remain active until the new one opens, when the old one will be taken down and the property landscaped.

The Big Birds of Ballardvale

Editors' note: The 2019 editions of the BallardVale Gazette celebrated the 125th anniversary of AVIS. Now we're taking a look at some Ballardvale wildlife. We invite you to contribute a piece about your favorite local fauna – or flora. White squirrels, anyone?

Wild turkeys are a seasonal addition to our series on neighborhood wildlife. The large birds are a common sight around Ballardvale, especially near woodlands. Flocks of turkeys can even be spotted “commuting,” heading out of the woods in the morning and following each other back in the evening.

Despite their name, turkeys are native to North America — in the early 1500s Spanish traders brought some turkeys that had been domesticated by Indigenous people in Mexico to Europe via Turkey, and that name stuck. The plump fowl caused a culinary sensation among Europeans who were otherwise dining on scrawnier species, like herons and storks.



When English colonists arrived in Massachusetts in the 1600s, they were delighted to see those same delicious birds growing fat on a diet of wild nuts, insects, berries, and snails foraged on the forest floor. More than a century later, Benjamin Franklin lobbied for the turkey as our national bird, citing its superiority to the bald eagle in good looks, yumminess, and historic value to the early settlers.

No surprise, supermarket turkeys are close relatives of wild turkeys, which are still hunted for food and sport. Once hunted to extinction in many places, they have been reintroduced and are now found in every state except Alaska. While these large birds occasionally refuse to yield to motorists, gobble exuberantly, and intimidate children, they are mostly more ornamental — with their iridescent feathers and brightly colored heads and wattles — than annoying.

Open for Business

Village center businesses have kept their doors open despite pandemic challenges. “Except for the initial shutdown, we’ve been open pretty much the whole time,” said Sharron Tirone of the Ballardvale Café.



“We’re getting by, one day at a time. People are wonderful, very supportive. But I am concerned about what happens when winter comes.”

Next door at Spinners Pizza Parlor, Darlene Warden said that it’s been a long recovery from last spring’s lockdown. “Daytime business was definitely off and is just now coming back,” she said. “It’s now also picking up for nights and weekends.”

Business at Sunday’s General Store has been “So-so but steady,” said Suk Lee. But that was not the case for their second store in Boston “We had to close that store last month after almost 30 years,” he said.

At the post office, Susan Pellerin reports that they have done fairly well since the two-week shutdown. “I have seen less college shipping lately,” she said, “but otherwise we haven’t seen any major disruptive impacts.”



Remember to support our local businesses through the winter.

Tree Lighting Festivities Cancelled

The annual tree lighting on the BallardVale Green usually happens on the first Sunday of December. But not this year. We’ll look forward to this festive community occasion — when neighbors traditionally gather to enjoy cocoa, cookies, and carols — on December 5, 2021.



FAQs

Ask the BVHD (BallardVale Historic District Commission)

We would like to fence in our yard. Do we need to get clearance about our design choice from the BVHDC?

Yes, you do need to get approval for any fencing “visible from a public way.” This includes stone walls and retaining walls. If your planned fence will be more than six feet high, you’ll also need permission from the town. On the other hand, “fencing” that’s approximately a foot or less high is considered landscaping, not fencing, and landscaping does not need approval from BVHDC.

Community Service Opportunity

The BallardVale Historic District Commission has openings for a couple of new members. Meetings, which are held on the first Wednesday of the month, are virtual until further notice. To find out more, contact Diane Derby: derby01@comcast.net.

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BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meetings will be virtual until further notice. Check andoverma.gov for updates and agendas.

November 4 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Virtual — 7:00 p.m.

December 2 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Virtual — 7:00 p.m.

December 6 Holiday Tree Lighting Cancelled

January 6 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Virtual — 7:00 p.m.

February 3 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Virtual — 7:00 p.m.