

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
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New State Law Could Affect Housing in Ballardvale

To address the state's acute housing shortage and escalating costs, the legislature is requiring MBTA communities to create "zoning overlay district(s)" with multifamily housing near public transit. The law does not mandate actually building any housing, but it does require zoning to allow for multifamily housing if a developer comes along. Communities that opt out of the proposed zoning will lose certain state funding. Any new zoning will be voted on at Town Meeting, and before then planners will be holding several public meetings. Visit andoverma.gov to see a video of the first meeting, held March 1. Ballardvale residents John and Mary Sudol attended that meeting and contributed the following observations.

Ballardvale is on the threshold of a significant change because of a 2021 zoning law requiring communities with MBTA service to create at least one district where multifamily housing is permitted "of right," meaning without requiring a special permit or approval. Municipalities that do not comply risk losing critical state funding including local Capital Access funding, which the Andover Housing Authority partially relies on to operate public housing.

The law is a response to the statewide housing shortage and focuses on housing near public transit, intended to create walkable neighborhoods closer to shops, schools, and parks. The new zoning requires a minimum density of 15 units per acre within a half mile of an MBTA station. Andover has two stations: Ballardvale and downtown Andover. The number of units is set at 15 percent of total housing, or 2,031 new units (not including units currently under development).

Public meetings have begun to gather input from residents on how best to comply with this legislation. Presenters [at the March 1 meeting]

emphasized that the planning process is in its infancy and a new zoning district would not guarantee that units would be built, although it would mean that developers could build without special permits or additional approval.

The town can vote to change zoning — parks can be redesignated and historic districts redefined. A developer could erect multifamily dwellings in a neighborhood zoned single family if an overlay district exists there. Andover residents will vote on the proposal as a zoning bylaw vote at a Town Meeting, probably in 2024.

It is critical that Ballardvale residents attend the public meetings to learn about the zoning plans and voice their concerns. Because this issue affects Ballardvale directly, it's important to understand the proposal and make informed choices. To find out about the public meetings, visit andoverma.gov and search "MBTA Community Zoning Law."

— John and Mary Sudol

Meet Your Neighbor: John Nicolosi

The auto shop and gas station adjacent to the Ballardvale train stop that was vacant for nearly 20 years has been given a fresh coat of paint and a new life, thanks to a new tenant with a passion for classic street cars.

John Nicolosi, a veteran auto technician, who built his first engine at 13 and has owned and operated vehicle repair shops in Lawrence and North Andover for most of his life, has expanded his business to 202



John Nicolosi in his new shop.

life, has expanded his business to 202 Andover Street. Nicolosi Performance Specialists had a soft opening in Ballardvale last fall after the owner completed a massive cleanup, and he is now gearing up to open to the general public this spring.

He said he plans to hire two full-time mechanics for the two-bay Ballardvale garage while focusing his North Andover shop on bodywork and detailing services.

"In this business it's about building relationships and trust with customers, and that's what I've been able to do for all these years," said the personable mechanic who has built a loyal clientele of area classic car enthusiasts, who collect muscle cars and hot rods from the 1960s and 1970s.

Nicolosi, whose own car collection includes a sporty 1972 silver and black Camaro and who loves drag races for fun at the New Hampshire Speedway, said he's excited about expanding his business in Ballardvale. He leases the property from Francis P. Reilly & Sons (the excavating company that operates behind the former mill) and took ownership of 202 Andover Street in 2021.

Until he retired, William Miller operated Shawsheen Auto Service on the site for more

than 40 years. Until Nicolosi cleaned up the property starting last summer, the property had been pretty much abandoned for nearly 20 years.

"It took a few months of power washing and degreasing and then putting on a fresh coat of paint inside and outside," Ballardvale's new business owner said.

And what does Nicolosi think about expanding his business in Ballardvale? "I love this area, the stories, the history. It's a great location, right next to train station. It makes it easier for customers to drop off and pick up their cars," he said.

What does he want his new Ballardvale neighbors to know about him and his business? "I do quality work, and that takes time to figure out what's really going on," said Nicolosi, adding, "I like a challenge."

BallardVale Dam

Please see our published agendas on the town website (<https://andoverma.gov/agendacenter>) for upcoming BallardVale dam discussions!

Food Pantry Feeds Neighbors

In Andover (yes, Andover) 20 percent of schoolchildren are food insecure, says Shari MacLeod, coordinator of the 24-hour food pantry at the Ballardvale United Church. Launched last September, the pantry is kept stocked by donations of food staples and cash. A neighborhood team of volunteers checks and restocks the pantry every day, shopping as needed. MacCleod says that several families who volunteer find it's a great learning experience for their children. The pantry is the brainchild of MacCleod's husband, Glen, who built the facility. His vision is to see similar pantries situated around town. Shari says the pantry serves more than 20 families and counting — demand has been increasing since covid-era SNAP supplements ended. You can help by volunteering, making a financial donation, and dropping off food. To donate and see which items are currently needed, visit the Food Pantry and Fridge page at bvuc.org (there is also an active Facebook group for the pantry). To volunteer, email pantry@bvuc.org.



Food pantry coordinator Shari MacCleod with her husband, Glen, who built it.

Backyard Beekeeping

For me, beekeeping is a hobby that has brought much pleasure, and a connection to nature in my own backyard. I have enjoyed planting gardens with flowers and vegetables since moving into Ballardvale. I have started a compost bin, so naturally the next step was to get bees ...right?

Backyard beekeeping is gaining in popularity. I started thinking about getting bees a couple of years ago. There is so much information online: social media groups and most states and counties have "bee associations" that you can and should join if you want to keep bees. Essex County has one and also offers beekeeping courses.

Last spring I got my first beehive. I ordered a "nuc" (a small nucleus colony of bees) from a local apiary. My "nuc" consisted of five frames of bees and a queen bee, marked so that she was easier to find among the thousands of bees. I then relocated these bees into an eight-frame Langstroth beehive box. This one box is called a deep brood box, where the queen will lay most of her eggs to start. The expression "busy as a bee" is no joke! My bees were active from the get-go, morning to night. I sat and watched the bees leave the hive and return with pollen of different colors. I would wonder what flower, what tree, and where in the neighborhood were "my bees" getting all this pollen. Watching the bees return with pollen just amazed me that they were playing a small part in nature in our neighborhood, pollinating plants. Bees are so important to our flowers and food supply, pollinating a high percentage of crops worldwide.

A couple of weeks after my bees were in their hive, I added another deep box. My bees, and the queen, were doing well populating their hive, feeding baby bees and making honey! One day in early June, I found my bees were swarming...yikes! I quickly went online, asked for help, and responses came quickly. I was able to get the swarm to settle down and cluster on a tree limb. My neighbor and I were able to snip the branch and get the swarm to fall into a bucket (wasn't that easy but space is short!).

I then had another hive deep box where I relocated this swarm. I now had two hives!

During the summer, the bees continued to do well. I was able to collect a good amount of honey to share with family, friends, and neighbors. I called this "BallardVale Honey"! As the summer was ending, I was getting nervous. Many beehives fail during the winter for various reasons: not enough stored food, mites (yikes), moisture, cold. I wrapped my hives up for the winter, gave them extra food, and hoped for the best. This spring, I found one hive failed to thrive; the other is doing well. My disappointment in the failed hive only makes me want to learn more so I can do better.



A flourishing backyard "Bee Castle."

Don't be afraid to try beekeeping! It can seem overwhelming, but with education, and a good hive, they do most of the work! If you can't keep a beehive, then maintain flowers or crop gardens in your yard so my bees can pollinate them and make me some honey! I always enjoy hearing a neighbor say, "Your bees were in my garden!"

— Teresa Padvaiskas

FAQs

Ask the BVHDC (BallardVale Historic District Commission)

How would the proposed zoning overlay district affect our Historic District?

The BVHDC has been told that, even if the BVHD has an overlay district, any property change that is visible from a public way will still require submission of an application and approval from the BVHDC. In addition, the BVHDC was told that conservation and AVIS land will not be eligible for inclusion in an overlay district.

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BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

- June 7** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.
- July 5 or 12** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.
- August 2** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.
- September 6** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.
- October 4** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?

If you have a question for the BallardVale Historic District Commission or a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue of the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors:

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