

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Vol. 20, No. 2

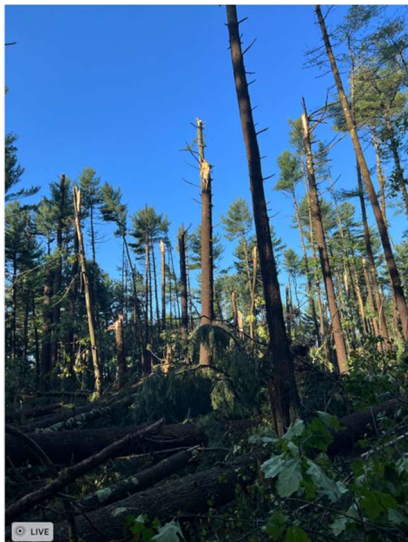
BallardVale, Massachusetts

Fall-Winter 2023

Storm Devastation on Pole Hill

The afternoon storm on September 8 knocked a devastating blow in BallardVale. Not only were houses, cars, and landscapes damaged, but our prized recreational area of Pole Hill suffered too. I caution anyone who takes a walk in Pole Hill to do so with utmost care. There are still large branches hung up on trees, and trees leaning on other trees that could shift at any time and come down. Future winds and rain will continue to bring down compromised trees, and many fallen branches are concealing holes under them like a trap. It is dangerous.

To me, Pole Hill looks like ground zero. After the storm, I checked on my neighbors and my property, then took a hike into Pole Hill. What I saw was shockingly sad. My backyard — my “back 40” as I call Pole Hill — had suffered immensely! All trails were blocked. Oak and pine trees many dozens of years old were uprooted, leaving holes measuring in feet. Pine trees were sheared in half. In one area, approximately eight huge pines are lying side by side. The middle of Pole Hill, where the historic dance hall was located, is practically impossible to get to and navigate through.



The storm appeared to touch down in the middle of the hill, travel up the hill, then stay to the left hitting Pole Hill Drive, Tewksbury Street, and Chester Street, before continuing into town. Had the storm veered more to the right, Center and Marland Streets would have had more damage.

After much going over and under trees, I finally made my way to the middle of the hill. Where

before you could see only slivers of the sky through the trees, it is now wide open! It looks like a clearcut forest but with debris still littering the ground.



It will take many weeks, maybe months, to open the trails. Neighbors have made some progress clearing and opening some parts of the trails, but it is going to take heavy equipment, like saws and chippers, to complete the job, especially in the middle. Still, the trails have been opened enough to navigate the loop around the circumference, but you still have to go up, over, or around some downed trees. This has caused a “human run” — what you would normally call a “deer run”: the beating down of a pathway around an obstruction. People using Pole Hill have been great. The pathways around the downed trees are close to the trail, minimizing further damage. But the middle of Pole Hill is dangerously impassable. I hope the hunters use caution as walkers will not all be on designated trails. This winter I would caution snowshoers and cross-country skiers to avoid the middle.

What is the future going to look like for Pole Hill? Mother Nature will start to heal the forest, but what will it look like? Now that the sun can beat down into the interior, what trees will regrow? Oak, pine, birch, ash? Will a pasture of grass and wild blueberries take over? It will be interesting to see how long it will take.

The question is, what about all the debris? There are dozens upon dozens of the biggest trees that have fallen or have been split and are still standing or leaning, waiting to come down. Will

all this debris be fuel for a forest fire if we have a drought? I'm hoping to see town officials and the Conservation Commission address Pole Hill and offer a plan for future cleanups and opening the trails. This recreation area is important to our BallardVale neighborhood.

— Teresa Padvaiskas

Storm Fells Trees on BallardVale Green

The storm that hammered Andover on September 8 uprooted mature trees, scattering branches and debris around the Green. Many residents went by to inspect the damage — and to make sure the Vale's favorite evergreen tree made it through the destructive microburst. Happily, it stood strong and is ready for the annual tree lighting on December 3.

MBTA Communities Housing District Recommendation Still Pending

Several community conversations about the new MBTA Communities Zoning Law have been held. The law requires that towns served by the MBTA

— including commuter rail — must expand available multifamily housing in a new overlay zoning district or lose certain state funding.

The law requires that the new Andover district (1) have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, (2) be located within a half mile of an MBTA station, (3) be suitable for families with children (no age limits), and (4) comprise 15 percent of Andover's total housing units (or 2,031 units).

The requirement of being close to public transportation is intended to create walkable neighborhoods near frequently visited destinations, such as shops, schools, restaurants, and parks.

The most recent meeting of the MBTA Communities Housing Working Group, the Town of Andover's planning staff, and interested residents was held Oct. 12, 2023. An area has yet to be identified as the recommended location for the new MBTA Communities Housing District.

More information about the MBTA Communities zoning law and its implementation in Andover is available at andoverma.gov/mbtacomunity.

Village Food Hub Is a Win-Win

What started in September 2022 as Andover's first (and so far only) 24-hour, self-serve food pantry, the Community Pantry and Fridge at the Ballard Vale United Church has become a popular way for Vale residents to fight food insecurity. Convenient, safe, and anonymous, the pantry receives numerous daily visits both from people donating food and people taking what they need.



The pantry is the brainchild of Glen McLeod, who as church moderator conceived the idea as a way for the congregation to support food security in the wider community. He built the two-bay food pantry with his sons, and his wife, Shari, coordinates the many volunteers who keep it running. The pantry is now moving an impressive 2,500 pounds of food — and counting — every month.

Once it became clear to the MacLoeds that the need exceeds what the pantry can handle alone, they decided to expand the effort into a nonprofit food rescue and distribution enterprise. This new initiative — the Village Food Hub — collects excess food that would otherwise go to waste from local growers and businesses like restaurants and food distribution centers. Then they process and store the food safely and redistribute nutritious, quality food to programs that serve people facing food insecurity. The Village Food Hub, a 501c (3) organization, is supporting a more equitable food system while reducing waste — a community win-win. To volunteer, go to villagefoodhub.org

BallardVale Day '23 — Another Success

The third annual celebration of the Vale brought sunshine and smiles, martial arts and crafts; neighbors, friends, vendors, and community groups to the playground for a lovely day in the park.

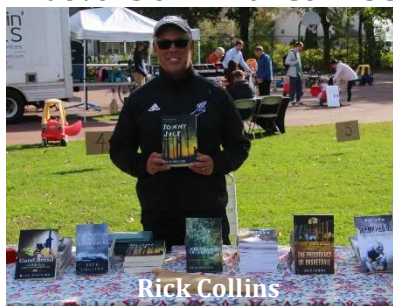
In addition to some 'old' regulars like the BallardVale Historic District Commission, Andover Community Trust, Andover Village Improvement Society, Andover TV, Ballardvale Scout Troop 76, and the Baluka Shop, we welcomed some newcomers.

Master Shin's World Class Martial Arts students dazzled the crowd with a display of their skills breaking wood and flying through the air, leaping over each other then landing safely to continue the drill.



Master Shin's students

On the mellower side we had two book vendors: Andover's own Rick Collins sharing his books



Rick Collins

inspired by growing up in town. Reading with Roberta brought a different genre of books: Paper Pie children's books. Both were great additions to the day.



Roberta Barcelos

Back again was COO Shari McLeod of the 24-hour food pantry and Village Food Hub — the food rescue nonprofit that has stepped up to help eliminate food insecurity.

If you wanted to explore more of the Vale, AVIS again led a hike through the Vale Reservation, while volunteers shared the good work of AVIS at their table.



Mark Kaluzny

We were glad that Dave Ricker, owner of Pedalin' Fools, was able to join us this year. Bette, his trusty mobile bike repair shop, and Dave parked on the court and got to work with safety inspections, service, sales, and sage advice.



Dave Ricker

Scout Troop 76 is always full of great stories and photos of their adventures! Their leaders hold many memories of growing up in BallardVale that illustrate how it has changed and still holds its charm. I always enjoy chatting with them.

New this year was Teresa, the Vale's local beekeeper. Until this year, I'd never tasted honey as local as what her BallardVale bees produce. Of course, it was delicious!



Teresa Padvaikas

Andover Elder Services and Public Works also helped make the day a success. With outreach to our Vale elders, bulbs that many planted at the playground sign, and touch-a-truck at the train station, we appreciate all that Elder Services and DPW do for us!

The Baluka Shop brought their beautiful hand-painted nesting dolls from Ukraine. The dolls are exquisite and vibrant, just like the owners of the Baluka Shop.



Vladyslav, Janina and Tetyana Syrotenko

To top it off, Chinese School Andover shared the wonderful course offerings and some interesting games, a book that rolls up, and resources that they teach their students. Chinese School Andover's first home was in BallardVale, and we are glad that they came back for the day.



Yan Wu, Xinfang Jin, Neo Zong and Angellina Zeng

For me, BallardVale Day is community building; making connections, meeting people, and finding out what is going and what opportunities are available to help build community. But mostly, it's hearing people's stories that makes BallardVale Day special for me.

A heartfelt thanks to all who make this day what it is, with a special shout-out to Andover TV for capturing it on film and sharing it with the world. (To view the clip of BallardVale Day, visit andover.tv.org.)

— Barbara Burke

A Village Thanksgiving for Everyone

This Thanksgiving Day the Village Food Hub will be welcoming all comers to a traditional feast in the Fellowship Hall at the Ballard Vale United Church. There will be two seatings of 100 people at 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., and another 100 meals will be delivered to people who are unable to make it to the church. This festive gathering is for everyone who wants to share a delicious meal and some fellowship on this holiday, and people who are food insecure are especially invited.

This event will need volunteers for the meal itself and for a couple of days leading up to it. To get involved, visit villagefoodhub.org.

Meet Your Neighbors

Barbara Burke Builds Community

BallardVale is fortunate to have so many residents who keep our community engaged and connected through their unselfish efforts. And they don't get more community-minded than longtime resident Barbara Burke. She is the one who came up with the idea for BallardVale Community Day, now in its third year and held October 14 at the BallardVale Playground and the train station. She is also the one who leads the BallardVale Tree Lighting event on the BallardVale Green on the first Sunday in December (see you there on December 3!).



Barbara Burke

Barbara took over the tree lighting in 2022 from Anna Kantzios, who took over from longtime organizer Diane Derby, who "retired" as organizer in 2020. Barbara said that about 100 people show up for the event, which includes some light refreshments donated by neighbors and sing-along Christmas caroling, led by former Select Board member Brian Major. "For me, it's all about getting people together and involved," Barbara said. "It's important to me that we want to see each other

face-to-face and show that our community remains strong.”

Barbara has deep ties to the Vale. She grew up on Dale Street in a brick duplex and said she loves living in an area of town that feels like a village. “It is its own little town, and that’s what I love about It,” she said.

Along with leading two of BallardVale’s popular annual events, Barbara works for the Town of Andover in the Zoning Department. Additionally, as a side gig, she is a licensed Realtor in Massachusetts and New Hampshire with the Bean Group, brokered by eXp Realty. But it is the volunteering and community organization that Barbara loves most. “What I like most is being able to bring people together,” she said.

Barbara is always looking for volunteers to help organize events in BallardVale and ideas for new events. She asks you to email her at: barbaraburkerealtor@gmail.com.

Vale Haunting

The annual Halloween Parade at the BallardVale Playground, which usually happens on the Sunday before the big day, was unfortunately rained out this year. But the Vale’s little goblins will get another chance to show off their costumes in October 2024.

FAQs

Ask the BVHDC (BallardVale Historic District Commission)

Do I need to get clearance from the Historic District Commission to repave my driveway? What about if I decide to enlarge it?

Driveways are among the exemptions in the Historic District bylaws, so repaving your existing driveway doesn’t require approval from the BVHDC. But when it comes to expanding the existing area, the bylaws make a distinction between driveways and parking areas or lots, which do require approval from the BVHDC and also must comply with the town’s zoning bylaws. The goal here is to protect abutters from potential annoyances like increased traffic and headlight

glare and consequences like surface water runoff from the hardscape.

**Infrequently Asked Question
(Do You Know the Answer?)**

BallardVale ZIP Code? It’s been said that BallardVale used to have it’s own unique ZIP code, but eventually took on the Andover ZIP code. Do you know if this is true? And if so, what was it? If you know, please contact Diane Derby at derby01@comcast.net.

BVHDC Application Change

In an effort to cut down on paper, the Town has decided that all applications, including those made to the BallardVale Historic District Commission, are now to be completed and submitted electronically. Applications are due five weeks before the meeting at which they will be heard.

Go Paperless!

As an email subscriber you’ll be among the first to receive the *BallardVale Gazette* — complete with **color photos** — while saving money for the town. Just send your name, street address, and email to Karen English: kfeenglish@gmail.com

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:
Karen English / kfeenglish@gmail.com
Joe Halpern / joehalp@gmail.com

BallardVale Historic District Commission

Andover Town Offices
36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 0181

US POSTAGE
PAID
ANDOVER, MA
PERMIT NO. 41

CALENDAR

Thursday, November 23 Community Thanksgiving Meal
Ballard Vale United Church — 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 3 Annual Tree Lighting and Carol Sing
BallardVale Green — 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 6 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 10 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 7 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.