

SHERMAN

Project to open up wetlands to the public

By Robert Miller

SHERMAN — A pair of ducks took off in the bright spring morning sunlight, flew a little ways, then splashed down again at Wimisink Preserve.

There was a red-winged blackbird calling over a full chorus of peepers. There were wood chips left where the wetland's resident beavers had been feeding.

People just driving by the preserve on Route 39 would catch almost none of this. After Earth Day on April 22, they'll have a nice reason to stop.

The Naromi Land Trust, which owns the preserve, is building a 300-foot-long boardwalk into the Wimisink wetland, thanks to a \$125,000 grant from the Housatonic River Basin Natural Resources Restoration project. The land trust will dedicate it on Earth Day.

The boardwalk is shaped like a big U. It starts at a new parking lot that's been built adjacent to Route 39 and ends in a viewing platform in the wetland.

It will be wheelchair-accessible — one of the few trails in the area designed for that use.

"But it's also for mothers with strollers," said Marge Josephson, president of the Naromi Land Trust. "It's for anyone who doesn't feel safe walking on uneven ground."

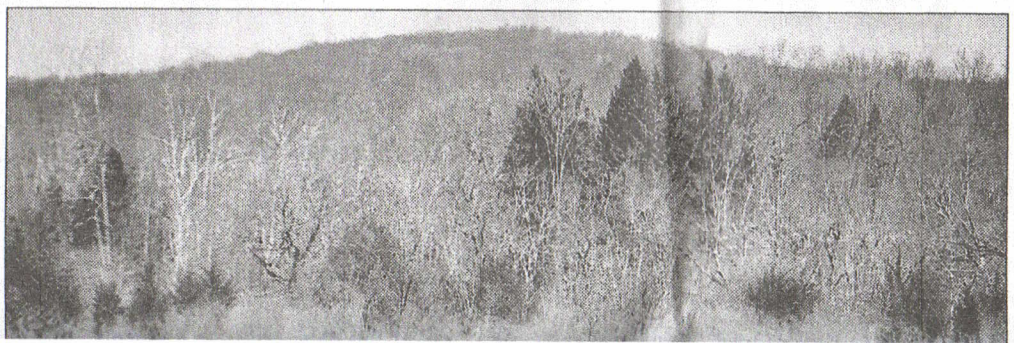
And for anyone who likes



Michael Duffy/Staff photograph

Above, Marge Josephson, president of the Naromi Land Trust, and contractor Peter Jensen, discuss the boardwalk they're building on the Wimisink Preserve in Sherman on Thursday.

At left, a beaver lodge can be seen from the boardwalk being built on the Wimisink Preserve in Sherman.



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wheelchair can turn around there. Jensen has been build-

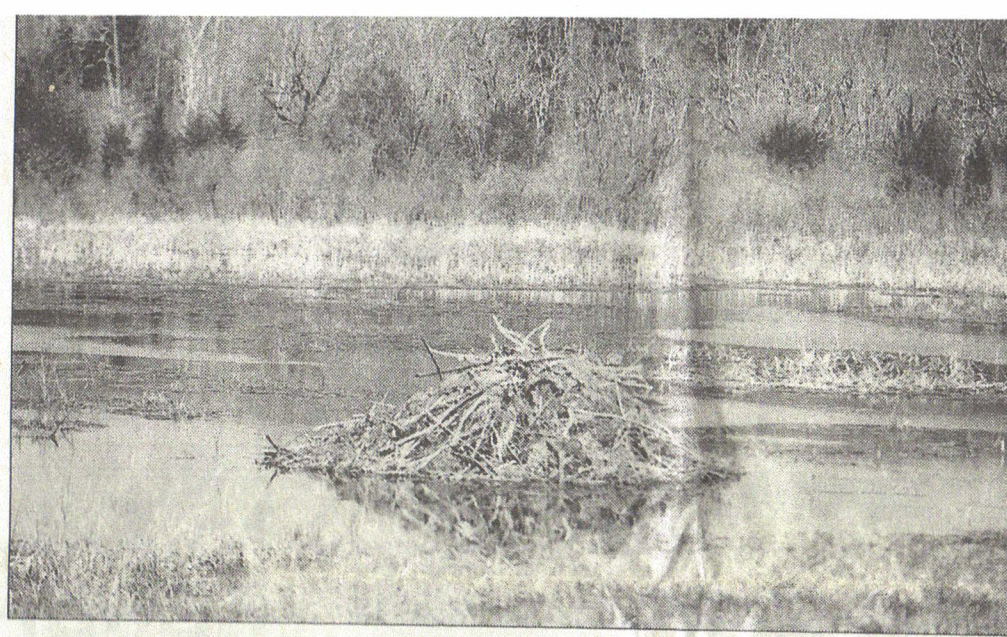
with strollers, said Marge Josephson, president of the Naromi Land Trust. "It's for anyone who doesn't feel safe walking on uneven ground."

And for anyone who likes a pretty wetland.

Hunter Brawley, the land manager of the Naromi Land Trust, said the 55-acre preserve is part of the Marble Valley geological formation that runs along the New York-Connecticut border from northern Ridgefield to Stockbridge, Mass.

Because the limestone/marble formations in the valley create a far less acidic soil and water than in the rest of Connecticut, unusual wildflowers and plants grow in parts of the valley. The formation can also harbor different fauna to go with its flora.

And it's a wetland. In spring, it get warblers and



duck migrating north. Both American bitterns and Virginia rails — shy marsh birds — have been seen at the preserve in past years.

"It should be good habitat for bog turtles, although we've never seen one there," Brawley said. "We're looking for leopard frogs there now."

The money paying for the boardwalk is part of the \$7.5 million that the General Electric Co. gave the state in restoration grants in 2000 as

At left, a beaver lodge can be seen from the boardwalk being built on the Wimisink Preserve in Sherman.

part of its settlement for its pollution of the Housatonic River with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs.

Because Wimisink Brook feeds into the Housatonic in the Gaylordsville section in New Milford, the boardwalk project was eligible for funding.

Peter Jensen, a professional trail-builder who has made several boardwalks, is creating this one of black locust wood — harder to deal with, but very durable.

"It'll last one day less than eternity," Jensen said.

Because the boardwalk is to be wheelchair accessible, Jensen said, he designed it with very gentle slopes broken up by flat areas. The observation deck at the end will be big enough so that a

wheelchair can turn around there.

Jensen has been building trails since the 1970s, forming his own company in 1988. In recent years, he said, he's been building more boardwalks.

"When you think about it, what are the areas left for trails now?" Jensen said. "We do more work now in sensitive areas — ridge line stream crossings, floodplains."

Workers are outside in beautiful settings. But one Jensen's crew, Erin Amadio said sometimes ear plugs are required.

"The peepers are so loud she said.

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DANBURY SCHOOLS

Task force recommends security upgrades

By Eileen FitzGerald

DANBURY — A city and school task force has made four recommendations to improve security in city schools, but did not take a position on whether the city's 13 elementary schools should have armed guards on campus.

The 15-member group, made up of city and school staff and elected officials as well as school board members and parents, finalized its recommendations Wednesday night. They will be presented to the Board of Education this month.

"It's OK to say there is no consensus," Kathleen Molinaro, a school board member and co-chair of the Special Task Force on School Safety said Wednesday night about

schools and at the high school.

The group agreed that the city should hire a consultant who would audit the school buildings for safety needs and then recommend changes.

The members also recommended that the schools standardize their emergency plans and language used during crises, and urged the school board to authorize the additional mental health professionals the district's staff has recommended in its 2013-3014 budget.

The elementary schools should continue to have safety advocates in place after the Dec. 14 school shooting in Newtown, the group also said. Those staffers are not armed, but watch out for security

receptor, said he has considered two consultants. One company is Jennings and Smith, which is doing a lot of work across the state. For \$150,000, the company would provide a building audit and assessment of what safety measures are in place and what might be needed, he said.

A nonprofit group, Safe Haven International, proposed to do the same audit for \$34,000.

Molinaro noted there may be some advantage to hiring the private company, which may be able to influence practices in the state and help the district write grant applications to get funds for some improvements.

"We want the consultant to look at each school to see what we did

made it safer, and now we want to enhance the safety."

Committee members admitted uncertainty about whether to recommend armed guards in the school.

Annrose Fluskey-Lattin, a school board and committee member, thought the city should survey the residents about adding armed guards since the taxpayers would have to pay for them.

Mayor Mark Boughton said city residents looked to the expertise of the committee to help make that decision. He said he wanted the committee to urge that safety advocates be trained for a heightened level of awareness.

That led the task force members to recommend to the school board

in tandem with the Police Department.

The committee has received a petition signed by 160 parents asking for armed guards in the elementary schools.

Superintendent Sal Pascarella said officials plan to have video cameras at the schools directly connected to the Police Department.

He said that when he met with Newtown Schools Superintendent Janet Robinson after the shootings, she urged him to make sure schools have a system that ensure swift communication with police and that police can monitor campuses on a regular basis.

The committee also recommended the district provide professional training to staff about identifying children who may have problems that need attention and to better link families to mental health services.

New Fairfield BOE and TOWN BUDGET VOTE, SAT., MHHS, 8am-8pm; Ballot page 3

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and Sherman

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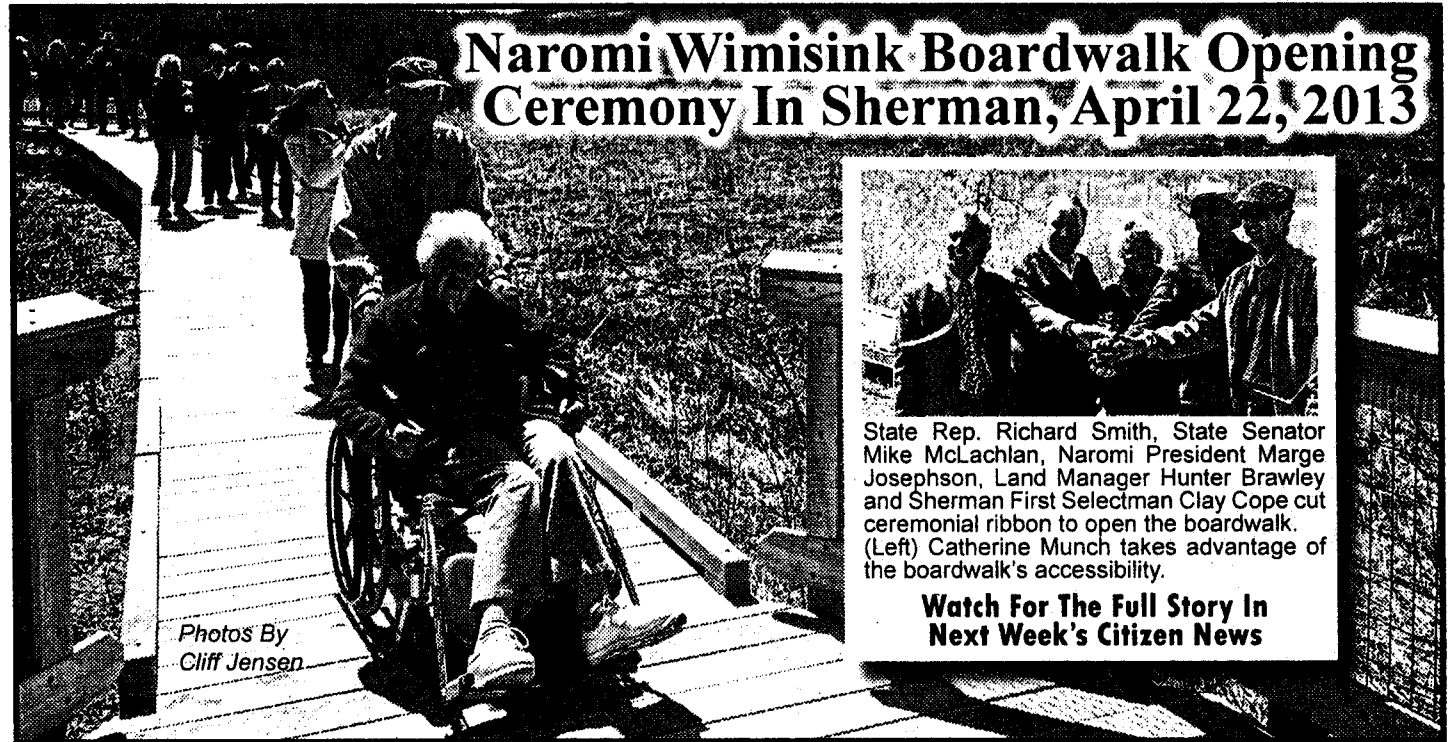
April 24, 2013

NEW FAIRFIELD BUDGET VOTE THIS SAT., APR. 27

By ROBERT BYERS

This Saturday, we as the voters and tax payers of the Town of New Fairfield will have our say on the Budgets for the 2013-2014 Fiscal Year for both the Town and the Education Department. The ballot presents these issues separately. We will each have a chance to vote for or against the Budget for the Town, and we will each have a chance to vote for or against the Education Budget. The ballot presents only the final figures for each budget and does not indicate the effect passage will have on our taxes. Passage of both of the budgets as recommended by the Board of Finance will result in a tax increase of nearly 4%. That is the percent of increase in the mil rate over the mil rate from the fiscal year 2012-2013. Last year we absorbed an increase of nearly 3%, as we did the year before. That comes to nearly 10% in the past three years. How many of us have had our incomes increase by 10% over these past three years? These two budgets have been worked on since the fall by the Town Departments, Superintendent Roy and her administration, First Selectman Hodge, the Board of Selectment, the Board of Education and the Board of Finance. I call attention to the amount of the increase this year, not to advocate against these budgets, but to call attention to the gravity of the decision before us on Saturday.

The budgets as recommended by the Board of Finance have been scrutinized and cut several times, and still contain a large tax increase. A major reason for the size of the tax increase this year is the



Naromi Wimisink Boardwalk Opening Ceremony In Sherman, April 22, 2013

Photos By
Cliff Jensen



State Rep. Richard Smith, State Senator Mike McLachlan, Naromi President Marge Josephson, Land Manager Hunter Brawley and Sherman First Selectman Clay Cope cut ceremonial ribbon to open the boardwalk. (Left) Catherine Munch takes advantage of the boardwalk's accessibility.

**Watch For The Full Story In
Next Week's Citizen News**

Free Community Forum *How to Age Happily in Place* this Sat.

By J.U. Azzi



We plan for so many things in life, yet very few of us consider planning for our later years other than financially. But we need to consider so much more than that to help prepare us for a "golden age" that we will truly thrive in and enjoy.

questions and interact with the speaker and panelists.

"Aging well is our own responsibility," said Maureen Salerno, LCSW and Chairwoman of the New Fairfield Commission on the Aging. "We must take an active role in our own well-being as we age and consider a holistic approach that involves sharing with others, reducing stress, participating in the community and developing relationships, among other methods," she explained, adding that "the self-care necessary to be well begins with self-value."

Ms. Salerno believes it is never too early to start thinking and