

Put your information in The Independent

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters must be received **by noon Tuesday** for publication in that week's paper. Letters may be handwritten, typed or emailed to don@nantucketindependent.com. Be sure to include an address and phone number. All letters are printed at the editor's discretion and may be edited.

CALENDAR

The calendar section includes free listings and photos of island events. Email your event listing to Gene Mahon, events@nantucketindependent.com. Fax: 508-228-4858. Listings and photos for consideration must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**.

ENGAGEMENTS & WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Provide either your own pre-written announcement or fill out one of our forms and we will write it for you. Announcements and photos are printed free of charge. Forms are available at The Independent, and may be faxed or emailed. Call 508.228.1654, or email sharon@nantucketindependent.com. Announcements and photos must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**.

BIRTHS AND FIRST BIRTHDAYS

Provide us with your child's name, date of birth, name of parents, siblings and grandparents. You may submit a photo or drop by the office anytime during normal business hours and we will take the photo for you. Must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**. Email: don@nantucketindependent.com

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Provide either your own pre-written obituary or fill out one of our forms and we will write it for you. Obituaries and photos are printed free of charge. Forms are available at The Independent, and may be faxed or emailed. Call 508.228.1654, or email sharon@nantucketindependent.com. Obituaries and photos must be received **by 5 p.m. Monday**.

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Direct news tips, information and questions to: Don Costanzo, Editor, 508.228.1654, don@nantucketindependent.com.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please direct orders and address changes to: Sharon Liburd or Dan Drake, 508.228.1654, sharon@nantucketindependent.com, drake@nantucketindependent.com

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NANTUCKET WANTS YOU!

For few weeks now, we have seen daffodils along the roadside; first the green shoots, then the buds, finally the first blooms of the early ones and now the great profusion of yellow that cheers us up and makes us think that there may be such a thing as spring on Nantucket. The approach of Daffodil Weekend reinforces that hope, even though those in the know understand that long johns are very much de rigueur for participants in the antique car parade.

Daffodil Weekend provides us with a goal: if we make it to the end of April, we have survived the winter. It also takes many of us away from the self-absorption brought on by the eternal season of wind and damp and points us in the direction of how we survive the summer; an entirely different process of survival.

This year, the arrival of Daffodil Weekend has another benefit. It will distract us from what we as voters have inflicted upon ourselves.

Even as a staunch supporter of the concept that Nantucket's present form of government is badly broken and needs radical repairs, I have to acknowledge that without the Board of Selectmen, I would be hard pressed to find enough interesting – my characterization, not the readers' – things to write about. It is one thing to inflict upon them ones ideas of the directions that they should be taking. Serving up ideas is fun. Without accountability, one doesn't mind going out on a limb and saying how things should be done. By the next day, most readers will have forgotten and the politicians don't pay much attention anyway.

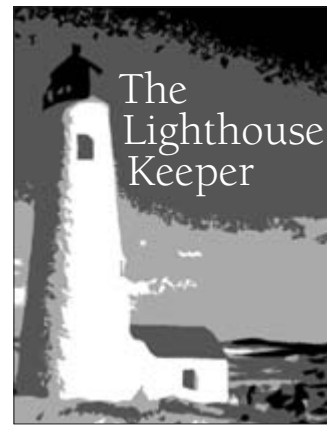
It is an entirely different matter to take people to task for how they work together in representing the community we have elected them to serve. When conduct is addressed, it strikes a chord. People usually do not want to hear what needs to be said and often choose to ignore it, but they remember. And the opinion holder is very much accountable in the eyes of those being addressed.

With that introduction, the current situation of the Board of Selectmen needs to be dealt with. Acknowledging that politics always plays a role and must be considered as a factor in people's behavior, the current board has gone well beyond dysfunction to a state that brings to mind the most dysfunctional of families. The bickering and pettiness that has characterized the board for the last three or four years has gone beyond politics to demean both the board as an institution and the individuals who serve as selectmen.

With the recent election, one might have hoped for a new board and a new beginning. For no particular reason, but bolstered by inherent optimism, one could only wish that last week's election would wipe the slate clean.

It did not happen!

Eleven hours after the polls closed, they started in again. At the 9 a.m. meeting on Wednesday morning, when the newly elected selectmen are sworn in and then the meeting turns to the election of the board's chair for the coming twelve months, tradition was broken by the adoption of



By DANIEL W. DRAKE
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

a proposal to wait two weeks before electing the chair. The result was that selectman Michael Kopko assumed the chairmanship for the inter regnum by dint of his being Vice Chair of the board for the past year.

Giving Mr. Kopko full credit for the coup which many believe he engineered to enable him to show his stuff in the role of chair for a couple of weeks, nonetheless, the result of the vote to postpone the selection was to widen

the fracture in the board. The aftermath has been entirely too much finger pointing and recrimination, as well as an unfortunate public incident in which one selectman overreacted to someone who had criticized him.

One observer likened the situation to that of school kids who want to be the first to rat out someone else. In short, not much has changed with the election and since it is likely that the new chair will be one of the principal miscreants, or at the very least an enabler, there is not much hope that the negative atmosphere which currently permeates the board will change anytime soon.

There certainly is no requirement that the members of the Board of Selectmen like each other, or even that they respect each other. They do, however, have a mandate from the voters to run the town. That mandate, from this voter's perspective – and I believe I voted for every one of the current selectmen – did not include, however, permission to behave like yentas and bullies. I, for one, want them to govern. If they have to fight, it should be about matters of substance, where reasonable people can disagree; not about interpersonal rivalries and perceived slights. There are too many important issues facing our town fathers for them to spend the time and energy wasted on these recurring but inconsequential, yet way over-blown, spats.

How the situation must also annoy and distract town employees who are trying to do what they have to do, only to be faced with the fouled atmosphere the board creates and the meddling in their day-to-day work that the negative environmenters.

There are five smart people on the Board of Selectmen. If they put their minds to it, they could provide us with a lot of positive direction. If they started thinking about the common good and eschewed the pervasive one-upmanship, it could be an excellent board.

Why do we care? Daffodil Weekend is upon us and many of us won't come up for air until the fall. By then, elections will again be looming and the board will be into its annual town meeting preparation phase. We won't know or care much about what the Board did over the prior six or eight months. But wouldn't it be a pleasant surprise to realize that during our daffodil-induced summer trauma, things had changed and the members of the board were actually behaving themselves? ■

The "Lighthouse Keeper" reflects the views of the author and does not necessarily represent the editorial position of The Nantucket Independent. Please send any ideas or comments to drake@nantucketindependent.com.

NEIGHBOR

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days a week from April into October and about one day a week in the winter.

When she is not working, Sweidel gives to the community through volunteerism. She has participated in programs at the elementary school, and as a court advocate for A Safe Place, and is presently on the board of the Nantucket School of

Music and tutors and teaches with the Literacy Volunteers of America which holds free English as a Second Language classes at the Atheneum.

Sweidel enjoys spending time with friends, walking, reading, playing bridge and traveling.

"My favorite place to go now is San Francisco to visit my seven-month-old twin granddaughters," she said of her daughter Suzanne's new family. ■