

An Alignment of Ecology and Spiritualism in Greensboro

by Doug McClure

GREENSBORO — Five University of Vermont (UVM) graduate students, the Greensbors and Trust (GLT), and the sisters of the Green Mountain Monastery are working together to study and conserve the Monastery's 167-acre property for future generations.

For the students and their mentor, professor Walt Poleman, it is an opportunity to document the property's unique ecological and historical value, a "learning landscape," according to Carolyn Loeb, one student involved in the project. The graduate students are in part documenting the monastery's Northern White Cedar swamp, which is moderately uncommon in Vermont, according to the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Greensboro Land Trust (GLT) and the sisters want to see the property conserved and are interested in parlaying the results of the research into an ongoing effort to conserve the land, says Claire Gray, chair of the GLT. "Sister Gail explained that the nuns at the monastery plan to apply for supplemental funding from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), so they can get a conservation easement. A conservation easement in this case would make a voluntary legal participation of the land for perpetuity to protect its natural resources from development."

The GLT would obtain and hold the easement, possibly with the participation of the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and the sisters would conserve it. The current research project culminates on September 16 with a two-part presentation of the students' findings to the sisters, the GLT, and the public. The first part will be the presentation of the study findings; the second part is a walk-through of the property, weather permitting.

Today, the students are watching a video from one of the two game cameras they have set up. An adult black bear has wandered into frame and is curiously checking out the camera. Given the surroundings in which the students spend half of their time — a 167-acre property that features rolling green hills, dense forests, and two shallow streams — it hardly seems like work. Unfortunately, the students only get to spend half of their research time here. The rest is spent back in Burlington, where they analyze the data they have gathered.

Seth O'Brien, of UVM's Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Resources, is the information technology specialist who helps make the work easier. He used an aerial drone to capture video images of the entire property. The footage is useful to show to visitors, but also helps the students gauge the canopy cover in areas of the property.

"We're mapping human influence on the forest," says Loeb, as she points out a row of trees standing in a straight line. "This once was farmland. That's planted by people. It's interesting to see how natural areas have been altered so recently."

Like the other four students, she is working towards a Master's of Science (M.S.) degree in Plant Biology through UVM's program in Field Natural History and Ecological Planning. This is their last scheduled study visit before heading back to UVM.

photo by Doug McClure

A team of UVM graduate students sets out to document the unique ecological and historical landscape of the Green Mountain Monastery in Greensboro.



A crowd stands in front of the former Greensboro Garage building in Hardwick, aka The Big Yellow Bear, on August 10 for the presentation of ten Northern Border Regional Commission grants, totaling \$2.2 million.

New Agricultural Enterprise Center

by Vanessa Fournier
Hardwick, aka The Big Yellow Bear, on August 10 for the presentation of ten Northern Border Regional Commission grants, totaling \$2.2 million.

HCA's Red Roof Earns Reprieve Under ACT 250

by June Pichol Cook

GREENSBORO — With approval of Land Use Permit #R1359-1 and a few caveats, the red roof of the new High Center for the Arts (HCA) is "findings of the District 7 Environmental Commission (DEC) are so favorable that the Laborator's master plan issued a "Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law Order," on June 30 and the thirty-day window for appeals closed with none.

Attorney Robert Halpert, representing the HCA Trust, says, "We are certainly happy to have satisfied all the ACT 250 criteria and we're pleased that, with major regulatory approvals behind us, we can continue to focus our time and resources on arts programming and other uses of the HCA to benefit the community."

Criterion 8 of ACT 250 is a provision which deals with interfering impacts of a "substantial" visual impact to the average viewer. Under Criterion 8, a project will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of a ridge, aesthetic, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural resources.

The 26,000 sq. ft. HCA performing arts complex, at 2875 Hardwick Street, was permitted under its application #R1359 on August 11, 2016. While under construction, however, the applicants sought

photo by Doug McClure

The Highland Center for the Arts' (HCA) controversial red roof survived a permitting challenge. The District 7 Environmental Commission issued a finding supporting the HCA on June 30 and the thirty-day window for appeals closed with none.

changes and filed #R1359-1 relating to architectural design, occupancy, roof line, roof colors, hours of operation, and signage.

The Commission found the amended application affected both operational and physical changes that involved potential aesthetic impacts and held a hearing.

Commission Chair Eugene Reid and Nicole Davignon found the red roof to be a "relatively prominent" feature of the building. However, the brown timbers contrasting sharply with the silo's light gray, the unusual, one-story, angled roof, the large municipal fire station located nearby also features a red color.

The original design, approved under #R1359, depicted a white-colored roof. However, when built, the roof was a deep mahogany red. Friends of the Commission raised objections. Under 10 V.S.A., section 6085(e)(5), Sheila Dillon, Christine Armstrong, Niemi Trust, Rusty Newhouse, Ellen Celnik, and Lisa Armstrong were granted status as Friends of the Commission.

Specific physical viewpoints of concern were travelers on Center Road and a stepped vehicle trav-

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elling south on Lakesboro Road at the intersection with Center Road from where there is a prominent view of the project. The Commission ordered additional landscaping with fast-growing softwoods to create the "appearance of a naturalized forested area."

"It required HCA Trust to submit renderings of how the area would appear for five, ten and twenty years. HCA Trust submitted a supplemental landscaping plan which was approved by October 15, 2017, unless extended. It must submit written reports, including photographs, plant survival, mortality, and re-planting of failed plantings, in three, six, and ten years."

The Commission reserves the right to schedule hearings and conduct site inspections to review progress and/or impose additional conditions, as it deems necessary. Under Criterion 1: Air Pollution and Criterion 8: Aesthetics, the Commission reserves the right to evaluate and impose additional conditions. That caveat remains in effect for five years from the issuance of the final order.

The Commission also recommended additional landscaping along a walking path extending from the arts center to Center Road at Lakesboro Road. The walking path was approved under the original application. Objectors raised aesthetic concerns later, and the Commission also took steps to address the issue. HCA had requested expansion of operations into late evening hours (10:30 pm. to 12:00 midnight) which the Commission deemed as "unreasonably disruptive to the rural "late-night tranquility of the area." The Commission cited information distributed to vacation renters of property in Greensboro which instructs these occupants to See **ROOF PAGE FOUR**

Hardwick to Purchase Barn Site

by Ray Small

HARDWICK — Governor Phil Scott and U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy were in Hardwick on Thursday to announce a \$250,000 Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) grant to transform the former "Greensboro Garage" on Route 15 into a new agricultural enterprise center.

The grant is one of ten NBRC grants, totaling \$2.2 million, announced Thursday. The grant will make infrastructure improvements, invest in technical assistance programs and help businesses and organizations in the area.

The Northern Border Regional Commission has a unique role as a federal-state partnership to identify common challenges and pool resources towards efforts to address those challenges," said Scott. "These grants aim to help our forest-based economies, our emerging agricultural entrepreneurs, and the communities they depend upon to make investments in themselves — creating new opportunities for Vermonters. This is incredibly valuable to our efforts to grow Vermont's economy."

The Town of Hardwick received a \$250,000 grant to purchase the Greensboro Garage parcel. The Town was being urged by the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) to create a multi-tenant facility for growing local agricultural enterprises.

The next step for Hardwick and the CAE is to finalize the purchase of the land parcel and to finalize plans for the new facility. Initial plans call for several buildings that offer light manufacturing, storage and retail space.

Hardwick Town Manager Jon Jewett noted some of the details that need to be addressed. He said that zoning bylaws had already been changed in anticipation of receiving the grant. Local retail establishments had been grandfathered in the zoning regulations. These have now been changed to allow for a planned welcome center for regional products of local agri-businesses. Jewett said that improvements to water and sewer effluent will be needed, as well as final design for the project. Nonetheless, he views the grant as a great benefit to the town.

"This will allow us to help businesses flourish — and stay in town," said Jewett. Chair of the Hardwick select board, is also focused on the next steps. A feasibility study to help define the use and design of new facilities is being finalized. The consultant to perform the study is being selected and the board is interviewed a number of qualified candidates. According to Bernick, the study's findings will help steer the final planning decisions.

While Bernick is enthusiastic about the value that the town will get from the new facility, he cautions that the way forward is full of time-consuming details.

"After the feasibility study, we need to finalize the concept and draw up plans before we do any construction. The whole thing could take a couple of years."

Created in the 2008 Federal Farm Bill and funded since 2010, the NBRC is a federal-state partnership for economic and community development in northern Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Vermont's NBRC territory includes communities within Grand Isle, Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Caledonia, and Lamoille Counties.

Senator Leahy, Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said, "These federal funds will serve as a catalyst for economic See **SITE PAGE FOUR**

More Grants Awarded

Nine other NBRC grants were also announced Thursday.

Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST): \$200,000 to undertake repairs and construction along the Lamoille Valley rail bed, which runs 11.6 miles from Sheldon to Swanton.

Green Mountain United Way: \$191,700 to fund an employee-assistance program, Working Bridges, at three regional business centers.

NeighborWorks of Western Vermont: \$250,000 to expand the HEAT Squad program to Orleans, Essex and Caledonia counties. The project will help homeowners complete 600 audits and 232 energy efficiency projects, while creating 36 jobs.

Northern Forest: \$162,500 to provide technical assistance to more than 70 forest-based businesses, including See **GRANTS PAGE FOUR**

photo by Doug McClure

Ryan Sprnger gets some fresh water from Claire's spring. All the springs on the woodlot are named after Dave Stoner's grand children.

Stoner Family Creates Conservation Legacy

by Doug McClure

GREENSBORO — "What is the best way to enter a forest, take the things for our use, and not disrupt its systems?" asks Rose Morgan of Northern Forests Conservation and Mogan, acting as a consulting forester. The first stage comprises three tours of the property, each with a different focus and a hike of varying difficulty. Morgan's tour is the most difficult of the three, with the majority off-trail, and focuses on silviculture. It leads through See **LEGACY PAGE NINE**

Academy Proposal Gets A Deeper Board Review

by Will Walters

CABOT — Establishment of an academy received continuing scrutiny by the school board July 31, when it looked further into the proposal by Mike Rushman and Fran Voigt. Under the proposal, the school could become a Regional Education District comprising a yet-

photo by Doug McClure

to-be-determined number of towns that currently operate in Pre-K to 12 schools.

Voigt's experience in educational development and administration comes from being a founder of the New England Culinary Institute in Montpelier.

Rushman and Voigt said earlier that the objective is to allow continued independent operation of the individual schools, while addressing the need to increase enrollment at each school. Increased enrollment would develop from establishing a new tuition payment model at attracting out-of-state students, who would live in the towns where they attend school.

The proposed academy would use tuition from attending students, dining in between tuition payment to the school, a room and board payment to the host family, and a contribution to an "enrichment" pool that would be used to increase course and extra-curricular opportunities for all students at the school.

The local academic anticipates creating a hybrid public-private academy that would set the number of boarding students at up to 100, which is the local student population. Stu-

dents in the Boston metropolitan area and New York regional area would be targeted prospects. Boarding would be \$12,000 a year, which would include room and board expenses. The local school would receive \$15,000 a year, and the rest would go to boarding costs for host families and supporting village programs by the state for administrative costs.

Cannan, Cabot, Chelsea, Craftsbury, Rochester, and Bethel — the school districts with the smallest high schools in the state — are the prospective participating schools at the moment. Together, they have a total high school enrollment of 350 students.

The state's role would be to enact any necessary legislation and regulations and appoint someone as chair to the Vermont Academy Board of Trustees. See **ACADEMY PAGE FOUR**

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