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Supervisory Union Votes on Preliminary Central Office Budget

by Michael Bielawski

WOLCOTT — The Orleans Supervisory Union (OSU) board met with central office administration at the Walden Elementary campus on Thursday evening to discuss the central office budget.

There was a vote to make it a preliminary budget, reflecting the uncertainty in current budget estimates. The uncertainties include health insurance costs, as staff is still determining which plans they will choose during the enrollment period, which lasts until Friday.

The total preliminary central office budget spending amount is \$7,846,182, a 3.4 percent drop (\$205,244) from the prior year. This preliminary budget is definitely not going up any more.

A sticking point continues to be the hiring of a new administrative assistant. The main criticism continues to be that if individual boards are to be expected to cut their budgets and services because of a major shortfall in the state's education fund, this is not the time for the central office to add new staff.

"I can't support this, not because I don't see a necessity for this, but because we have to look at our own budget situation," chair of the Wolcott Board Peter Burgess said. The board ultimately voted to approve a half-time assistant.

LaFrance said a big part of this request has to do with whether a machine or a receptionist answer the phones. She said when it's a machine, she gets strong negative feedback from the public.

"It's not just directing people but it's after-the-fact customer service," she said.

See BUDGET, 5



The charred ruins of the Stannard Mountain Road property that burned on December 4. Inset: an undated photo of the property.

photo by Doug McClure

Second State Trooper Suspended as Stannard Fire Investigation Continues

by Doug McClure

STANNARD — Vermont State Police (VSP) have issued a statement that second trooper Trooper Jason Haley, has been suspended as a result of the ongoing investigation into the December 4 fire that burned down an A-frame building in Stannard.

Chandra Miller composed the statement concerning the meeting held on December 11.

According to public records, the building was a 1,444-square foot,

4-bedroom home built in 1980 and purchased by Trooper Stephen McGranahan in October, 2008 for \$45,000. It was put up for sale in 2015 for \$100,000 and reduced to \$80,000 in 2014 before being taken off the market. A 2015 assessment valued the property at \$110,000.

Greensboro Fire Chief Dave Brochu said that the Greensboro Fire responded to reports of a fire and explosion at 12:21 a.m. on

December 4.

"With multiple reports of fire and smoke, I called for additional help from Walden and Woodbury Fire. First arriving personnel reported that the A-frame ... was fully involved," says Brochu. "Once I got on scene, I canceled both Walden and Woodbury, as we had plenty of water from a nearby brook and I had fire help from reports of a fire and explosion at 12:21 a.m. on

The VSP press release says that McGranahan had a permit for burning brush, but not the A-frame building.

Brochu said that he called Hardwick police due to the travel time necessary for a Vermont State Police response. He declined to comment on further specifics, citing the ongoing VSP investigation.

Act 46 Meeting at Twinfield Union Moved for Tuesday

by Will Walters

MARSHFIELD — The weather that prompted canceling school at the Twinfield Union School on Tuesday also led to canceling the school board meeting. This evening had cancellation led to a flurry of e-mail discussions by board members about the meeting's importance, since it was to hear the input of the public on Act 46.

Superintendent Mark Tucker issued a statement about the meeting and rescheduling of the meeting to December 19.

"The Twinfield Union School board meeting this evening had been canceled because school was canceled the day. The board is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, December 19 at 6:00 pm. All items originally on tonight's agenda will

be rescheduled for the 19th including the public forum on the Act 46 plan. If you would like to submit questions or comments in advance, please e-mail them to Patrick Healy, board chair at patrick.healy@twinfieldunionschool.org no later than noon on Sunday, December 17th.

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See TWINFIELD, 5

New Owners Resurrecting Hardwick Village Motel



HARDWICK — The Hardwick Village Motel has new owners and history seems to be repeating itself.

An April 23, 1959 article in the Barre Daily Times describes the then-brand-new Village Motel on Route 15 as "beautiful" and says "Five years ago, this same site was a long way from being attractive — for the scene here was that of a tumble-down sawmill (the shipman Sawmill), rick with weeds and scattered debris."

Sixty-three years on, the same sentiment rings true of the site, as it still falls into disuse. However, these days have gone wild since the establishment shut.

Now, Pury and Freda Høller of Willamston hope to resurrect the success the motel's original owners, Alan Atkins, had in transforming a site in need of rehabilitation into something special for travelers and motorists to enjoy.

Whereas in 1954 Atkins had to contend with an unexpected year-long lack of concrete he could not make ("due to lack of love for money," the Høllers say) they only have relatively minor updates and repairs to do, such as new television, internet, and microwave.

Høller says he intends to re-brand the lodgings as the "Inn by the River." He intends to keep much of the original feel intact, describing it as "a mix of old-fashioned pine wall paneling (which is not the actual wood, just the imitation wood paneling that became a bit," says Høller.

He does not mention the property as a Bed and Breakfast (B&B), but rather a small vacation inn.

photo by Doug McClure

The Hardwick Village Motel is undergoing renovations. The soda machine was delivered on December 8 as part of the renovations that Pury and Freda Høller are pioneering in preparation for re-opening the motel.

by Doug McClure

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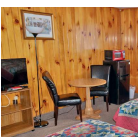
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photo courtesy of the Hardwick Historical Society

A 1950 photo of the Hardwick Village Motel from the Barre Daily Times. The photo shows the building and a sign that reads "Village Motel".



A double room in the soon-to-reopen Village Motel. The solid wood paneling is original. The floor is tile, wallpaper and microwave are new additions. Pury and Freda Høller hope to re-open by December 20.

photo by Doug McClure

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soal feel, the sort of place travelers would return to and know the proprietors. That would position the motel uniquely, as the nearest non-chain motel is in Morrisville and the closest inns are twice that distance from Hardwick.

Hardwick has a B&B, the Kimball House on Glendale Avenue.

See MOTEL, 5

Old Bridge Might Get Second Chance as Part of Rail Trail

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Anyone present in Hardwick Village on the morning of Friday December 8th might have caught a look at a very large green truss bridge deck being trucked through the center of town on a truck labeled "Oversize Load." County sheriff escorted the truck as it gingerly picked its way along South Main Street.

The ultimate fate of the truss is not yet 100% decided, but it might become part of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) and connect the Charville section to Hardwick, according to Town Manager Jon James B. McCarthy, a Structures Bridge Maintenance Engineer with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), wrote in an e-mail that there is a lot to sort out before that becomes a reality.

McCarthy says that the bridge was removed from Vermont 12 in Berlin just south of Montpelier in 1996 because of structural concerns and the bridge's width. He says the state is required to preserve historic bridges for adaptive reuse — alternative uses such as paths and trails.

The bridge sat dormant in a storage facility in Montpelier for over 20 years, until the City of Montpelier told the AOT it needed the space where the bridge was stored. The AOT has been working with the University of Vermont (UVM) Department of Civil Engineering's senior class on design projects, says McCarthy.

"We'll afford them the opportunity to design design details to reuse these truss bridges we have in storage around the state. Our goal is to rehabilitate them for people to use on bike paths or pedestrian walkways."



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photo by Doug McClure

An oversized truck transports a segment of bridge through Hardwick on December 8. The bridge was originally from Berlin and had been in storage in Montpelier after being dismantled. It may be used on the Long Valley Rail Trail (LVRT), between Charville and Hardwick.

See BRIDGE, 5

Woodbury Village Store to Shut For Good Dec. 31

by Doug McClure

WOODBURY — "It is with a heavy heart that Zach and I must announce that we will be permanently closing the doors as of the Woodbury Village Store, effective December 31st 2017, marks the six-year anniversary of the store's Facebook page."

Co-owner Jessica Waters says that the reason for closing the store is a combination of financial and personal issues. Waters says that the store's financial situation is not sustainable and that she and her husband, Kirk, are both suffering from Lyme Disease for over five years and is in constant pain; doctors have been unable to improve his well-being despite trying multiple treatments.

"It's over there making pizzas, says Waters, gesturing towards the pizza oven. "His legs hurt so bad he has to sit down, but he's still making them."

The store opened the doors to the public after renovating just over eighteen months ago, on April 29, 2016, after months of gutting 10 previous business' interior, adding benches to prep equipment shelves, all detailed in a series of posts on the store's Facebook page.

Now, says Waters, they must sell the store's inventory. "It's a bummer."

"We did a lot of work to get this place up to what it is," she says. "We've incredibly said that we're not going to be here for people. But it's just not financially viable. We

See STORE, 5



See STORE, 5

photo by Melissa Fourteen

The Woodbury Village Store is closing for good on December 31 after being in business for just over eighteen months. Co-owner Jessica Waters says the store is closing in part because of financial reasons and in part due to co-owner Kirk Kirkpatrick's struggles with Lyme disease.

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