

Unfunded Mandates Continue to Weigh on Police Department

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — The number of unfunded mandates from the state on local police departments is piling up, according to the police report at last Thursday's select board meeting.

One task assigned to police departments is the assessment of school security that Gov. Scott has requested in light of the school shooting in Florida. Police chief Aaron Cochran said his department has already met with the elementary school and, by this week, he plans to have met with the high school.

"They [the elementary school]

have done a great job of securing that location," he said. "We have some other ideas we want to do today, as well as combined training with the school staff and us, move police officers from the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council to the Office of Professional Regulation."

"It's continuing to pick up steam, and it looks like what may actually happen through legislation this year," he said. "They're looking at a bi-annual fee structure, but we haven't thrown any numbers out yet. That's where we're at there yet another unfunded mandate."

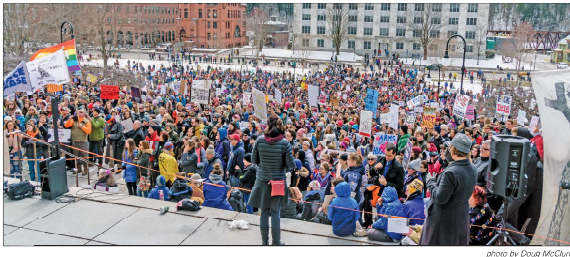
The police department was also

notified this past month that the training council is adding an additional five hours of continuing education credits to the twenty-five they already require.

"It doesn't seem like a lot, but when I ran the numbers, it's going to be another \$1,200 of training money that I didn't plan on, but we'll make it work," he said.

Town zoning administrator Kristina Leahy came before the board along with residents of East Hardwick to ask that the board approve Designated Village status, which would enable East Hardwick to gain more state aid for development.

See MANDATES, 8



Cadets did not stop a crowd of concerned students, teachers, and adult supporters from attending the March 24 March for Our Lives demonstration in Montpelier. The crowd listened to speakers, displayed their own stories about gun violence, and chanted slogans. (photos by Doug McCure)

Students March for Their Lives at Montpelier State House

by Doug McCure

MONTPELIER — A braising non-stop breeze did not stop an estimated 2,000 students, teachers and other adult supporters from turning out on Saturday, March 24 to push lawmakers to enact gun control legislation to keep kids safe in their schools.

The crowd grew quickly and filled most of the statehouse grounds. One counter-protester stood at the front to make his presence known, flying a white modernized version of the Gadsden Flag, which features a coiled snake with "Don't Tread on Me" emblazoned on it. Kenneth Blodgett of Lowell, Vermont, said "I think it's great that everybody came out to exercise

their first amendment rights. This is a sort of frog-in-the-pot situation, where the water's warm, the frog is comfortable. But it's never enough. These people won't stop until their agenda is passed and the water gets so hot it kills the frog. They're a lot of one-time money in play here."

Blodgett stepped to the microphone. Attendees spoke to this reporter while others in their group attempted to subdue the purple flag of that college, the strong breeze flying a white modernized version of the history America has had with mass shootings," said Marlon Hyde, 15. "It's time for politicians to act in the interests of their own people."

Mike Myers, also 18, said "We

need responsible and sensible gun laws. The people's vote should matter more than any lobbyist's money."

"I think it's a really great day of support," said participant Louis Gray, 19. "It's a really great display of solidarity with kids who have been traumatized by these events [school shootings]. Gray is 18.

Two students from Randolph,

both 14, discussed their reasons for attendance.

Chandler Anderson said "I feel scared at school sometimes. Like it's only matter of time before it happens in our school. It scares me."

"You never know if [a school shooting] is gonna happen, but now it feels like it could happen any day," said Bailey Wood. After the

See MARCH, 9



Jack Beapourant, who works at Farnham Farm in Plainfield, stands in front of their evaporator during a recent 2018 Maple Cream House Weekend.

Yellow Barn Project on Course, Say Officials

by Doug McCure

HARDWICK — According to Sarah Waring, Executive Director of the Center for Agricultural Economy (CAE) and Hardwick Town Manager, the Yellow Barn project to use the former Greensboro Garage as a craft brewery is on track to begin construction in late August when Governor Phil Scott announced it was receiving a \$250,000 economic development grant. In January of this year, the Hardwick Select Board approved

an additional \$25,000 from its own economic development fund which, according to town records, was last assessed as "fair to average" with an assessed value of \$61,600 for the building and \$96,400 for the property, which along with \$21,000 of other value totals \$109,100. The purchase price is listed at \$75,000, bought by a group known as the 1781 Group, for which Andrew Meyer is listed as the sole contact. Neither Waring

nor Waring knew the other parties in this group were, as of press time, Meyer had not replied to a request for an interview.

Both Jewett and Waring stated an objective of the project was to offer additional space for existing local businesses; Jewett cited Jasper Hill as one candidate, for extra brew storage.

The barn itself is formerly a dairy farm, and Jewett said it is not a fit of any initial work.

"Part of what's going to be tricky is that that barn has seen better days. It was a dairy farm originally and it's been a garage for 20 years, so it will take some major redoing to make the barn ready for some of these companies. It may be a little more expensive than could [make the project] more a little bit."

Citing a comparative analysis of what it took to get their own facility off the ground, which Jewett says at this point is the maximum and goal of the project.

Jewett says the barn is a secondary option. The main goal is to avoid flood plain concerns, than to rehabilitate the existing structure for food-oriented businesses, which is one of the core focuses of the project.

Both Waring and Jewett declined to be specific about potential tenants.

See BARN, 3

Sugarhouse Partners with Caledonia Spirits for Maple Open House Weekend

by Michael Bielawski

PLAINFIELD — This year, the state celebrates its eighth maple industry with an annual open house weekend that highlights the state's individual sugarhouses, letting the public tour sugarhouses to see the process.

This year, Farnham Farm on Upper Road just south of the Plainfield village was one of the sugarhouses that hosted the public.

Jack Beapourant was running a tour on Sunday afternoon, and said that last year, the farm had a crowd of 500 visitors and the number of visitors had nearly passed that mark by the end of the previous

year. "This is family-run operation with 7,000 trees taps started just five years ago and is growing fast. They anticipate producing 2,500 gallons this year, up from 2,000 last year. While the building and machinery still look newly-installed, plans are already underway to start knocking down walls and expanding, including doubling the capacity of their evaporator. This will be their fifth expansion.

During the tour, Beapourant highlighted the importance of the reverse-osmosis machine, which increases the sugar content in the sap from about 2 percent out of the tree to around 15 percent. This makes

the whole operation run smoother, he said.

"A lot less boiling time, a lot less evaporation, it saves us tons and tons of firewood," he said.

See MAPLE, 6

School Budget Re-vote Called For April 12

by Will Walters

CABOT — The School Board will be holding a re-vote of the public hearing and re-vote of the school budget at its Monday night meeting, being at Tuesday morning with Town Clerk Betty Hester.

The public hearing will be held April 9 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Cabot school library. The voting will take place from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Wilby building on April 12.

Walters said people wanting to vote by absentee ballot should contact the clerk's office as soon as possible to be sure that ballot requests can be received and ballots mailed out to voters with time to have them returned by

election day. She said ballots will be mailed out to voters "within the time frame" for them to be available.

The proposed budget is \$3,366,881. The budget is estimating a 2 percent increase in educational spending of \$18,217.03 per equalized pupil. The meeting is \$103,000 less than the budgeted amount. The projected spending per equalized pupil is \$20,269.78 in the Wilby building on



Mirray Murray, of Montrose Falls (left) brings Emily Jones and her niece Adrienne Woodard, 5, of Craftsbury a custom painted hat they just purchased from the artist. Marley was one of 40 workers at the Collif Hat Road in Hardwick March 24 to benefit The Lempire Area Cancer Research (LACR). The event raised \$2,221.22 to benefit LACR. The main organizer for the fundraiser was Jessica Stubbs of Walden.

