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photo by Doug McClure

Just two days before the centenary of the 1918 Armistice that ended the War to End All Wars, Wolcott's Veterans' Memorial is blanketed by the first accumulating snow of winter. Behind the monument is the original Wolcott Village schoolhouse which is due for a major restoration effort after decades of disuse.

Chip Troiano Looks to a New Term

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – Rep. Joseph "Chip" Troiano (D-Caledonia-2) of Stannard was his bid for re-election on November 8 and is looking to the new term. He plans to continue his ongoing focus on issues affecting pollinators, but has also been tasked by his constituents to take a harder look at Act 46's implications for local schools. He has already been working on those issues, as well as a bill which deals with holding companies responsible for the aftereffects of toxic chemicals.

Troiano has a 100% rating from the Vermont Conservation Voters and voted for two bills about toxic chemicals in the 2017-2018 session: S. 197, which would hold corporations liable for toxic chemical pollution, and S. 103, a bill which would have given the Department of Health more regulatory authority over toxic chemicals and would have protected children from harmful chemicals in toys and other children's products.

He said the push-back from corporate interests was analogous to the resistance to legal battles surrounding Agent Orange, a Vietnam-era chemical used to tactically deforest enemy territory, which poisoned service members who were exposed, in some cases well past the end of Vietnam due to secondary exposure. In the a widely-covered recent case, PFOA from plastics company Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics' former factories poisoned wells in southern Vermont. S. 197 would have held the company liable for the costs, not just to the environment ,but also the medical costs incurred by victims.

"It was the state dispensing bottled water and digging some new wells, it wasn't the company. I stood on the floor when the legislature was debating this and talked about Agent Orange, which poisoned me while I was in Vietnam. The governor's comment that people can seek redress in court is just really an ignorant statement. When the attorneys general of this country were trying to get compensation for veterans who were coming home, getting sick and dying, and meanwhile Monsanto and Dow Chemical fought for twelve years against a settlement of any kind. At the conclusion of my speech, I said 'Madam Speaker, I will not stand by while chemical companies are poisoning the citizens of Vermont."

Both bills fell to Governor Phil Scott's veto pen, which Troiano said corporate interests may have had a role in.

Many news outlets are now describing the current re-alignment of the Vermont Legislature as offering a veto-proof "supermajority," which Troiano said is a major oversimplification of reality and depends on a bill's subject.

"I think that whether we can [pass the vetoed bills from 2017-2018] or not remains to be seen, That's probably got to rely on some of the progressives who have pretty consistently voted with the Democrats. When you're speaking about a veto-proof majority, I don't think we would have it on a tax-and-regulate system [for cannabis]. I think that there were quite a few Democrats that didn't really want too much to do with any type of legalization. So, I wouldn't rely on a veto override on that."

Troiano also said he is seeing many concerning issues in the last stages of Act 46, with too many unanswered questions.

"Judging from the meeting the other night up at Lakeview, there were concerns from a fair number of a residents. I felt kind of bad. I mean, the school boards now are put in a position that they're being told to prepare for this merger and they're trying to do so. And they're getting feedback from their community saying, we don't want this. It's really dividing our communities. The school boards are in a position that they're obligated to work on this with all these unanswered questions, like we don't know what would happen to the buildings.

"We don't know what will happen to small school grants, or any debts or surpluses that will now be shared. So schools that have worked on a tight budget and have surpluses will have to give those up."

Troiano said of equal concern was that during recent Board of Education meetings, it seems to have gotten lost that the students will be affected.

"The other thing that is so important that just doesn't even come up at the meetings is what bearing will our students derive from this kind of consolidation? No one's even talking about that. What are the enhancements to our students' education?"

Troiano also felt that a minimum wage increase bill would be re-visited, along with paid family leave, both of which were vetoed by Gov. Scott, and agreed with gubernatorial candidate Christine Hallquist that the rural broadband issue

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Representatives Prepare to Get to Work

by Michael Bielawski

WOODBURY – The Lamoille-Washington district went from blue/red to blue/blue this election. Incumbents Dave Yacovone, D-Morristown maintained his seat, but Gary Nolan, R-Morristown, lost out to former legislator Avram Patt, D-Worcester.

The tallies were 7,954 votes cast for Yacovone got (34 percent), Patt (23 percent), and Nolan (21 percent). The district consists of the towns of Elmore, Morristown, Woodbury, and Worcester.

Despite the return of a Republican governorship, with incumbent Phil Scott winning a second term, there is a new super-majority for Democrats/Progressives in both the House and Senate. This means that they have enough seats (over two thirds) to override vetoes by Scott, assuming caucus members do not break party lines in significant numbers.

Yacovone said he is "honored, humbled, and happy" with the election results.

He said he will spend his time before the session re-familiarizing himself with primarily health care and affordable housing details. In particular, he said he will monitor closely as the Green Mountain Care Board works to keep premium rates down for Blue Cross and MVP.

Yacovone is in favor of Vermont initiating a penalty for those who opt out of health insurance.

"You want the pool to be a large as possible to spread the cost," he said. "If only the sick buy insurance then – guess what? – the cost of insurance will be out of reach even more so than it is."

He said the board is also working hard towards an "All-Payer" model for the state, which would consist of lump-sum payments to healthcare providers in an effort to make them promote healthy living for patients.

He is also interested in tackling the state's massive pension liabilities for state workers, which economists estimate to total in the billions. He said he is also in favor of divestment from carbon-based fuels for pension plans.

Yacovone's is in favor of expanded paid family leave and a $15 minimum wage.

He voted for S.55, a new gun law that limits magazine capacity and expands background checks.

On education, he is concerned about the state's school merger law Act 46, because he says small

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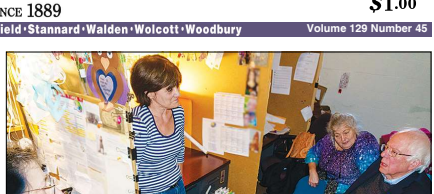

photo by Doug McClure

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) speaks with Hardwick Head Start staff about the program and its needs. Head Start staff (left to right): Teacher Lee Ann Lee, Hardwick Head Start Center Manager Denise Hill, and teacher Lesa Cathcart.

Senator Sanders Visits Hardwick Head Start

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) got a first-hand look at the Hardwick Head Start facility on November 12 and spoke with staff. "The bottom line," said Bernie Sanders after hearing from workers at the program about the major challenges faced by the facility, "is what should I do?"

Teacher Lesa Cathcart spoke with him about those challenges, chief among them being the cramped facility, which is a problem nearly three decades old with no end in sight.

The magnitude of that problem was illustrated from the beginning of Sanders' visit, as he was quietly threaded through a room of children napping on mats on the floor, careful not to wake them. Cathcart said the facility is technically "just big enough" for the number of kids served, ,Judging by the tight quarters where Sanders met with the facility's staff , that assessment may be generous.

The facility has a very small outdoor play space for the kids, which is also technically adequate, measured in a square-foot-per-child ratio, according to Cathcart. She told Sanders the facility has tried for almost thirty years to find a better space and has had no luck, with deals falling through at times because adjacent homeowners didn't like the idea of a preschool serving families in financial distress near them.

She said "in a perfect world" the program could be relocated to Hazen's grounds. There is ample room, access to the Hardwick Trails, and she felt getting the Hazen students involved in some aspect of taking care of the children would give those students a much better idea of what is involved with taking care of a child.

"It would be a good thing to have teenagers work with the kids. They can see what it's like to have kids," said Cathcart. Hill agreed that a collaboration with the school would be beneficial.

Sanders said this sounded reasonable and asked her how long discussions with the school had been going on; when Cathcart replied "since 1998," Sanders briefly forgot children were sleeping and loudly said in disbelief "Twenty years??"

Fortunately, none of the kids woke up.

The issue of needing a new building was echoed by Lee Ann Lee and Denise Hill, manager of Hardwick Head Start. Hill brought up recent changes to Vermont licensing for day care facilities, which has decimated the number of available childcare options for parents and increased demand on Head Start. Many day cares have closed, she said, because the regulations made it too difficult to be financially viable.

Transportation is another another major issue, Lee said, with staff not allowed to transport because of liability insurance issues.

Lee said it is also difficult to staff the facility. Unless a staff member is a licensed teacher the pay is not good, she said, despite the qualifications and skill level of the staffer.

All three added that Head Start provided excellent professional development opportunities for staff, with substantial help in getting degrees, and the program itself is very valuable. All three were originally clients of Head Start.

"We're living examples of what this program can do," said Lee.

She said another issue is homelessness, which is much more prevalent than people believe.

"I've done home visits in hotels," she said. "I've done home visits in tents."

Sanders said he wanted the staff to get his team involved in applying for grants and setting goals.

photo by June Pichel Cook

Craftsbury Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Walter Gutzmann was memorialized in a somber ceremony at the Craftsbury Academy gymnasium and laid to rest on Saturday at the Craftsbury Cemetery with full honors from fellow firefighters and friends across the area.

Craftsbury Fire Chief Walter Gutzmann Called to Final Tone

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY – Craftsbury Fire Chief Walter C. Gutzmann, Jr. was called to the last Ringing of the Final Tone as he was laid to rest on Saturday in the Craftsbury Village Cemetery. Cold brisk winds swept across the processional march to the cemetery interment services where ringing the Firemen's bell by Derby State Police dispatcher acknowledged the call was ended.

The silent response to the Ringing of the Tone hearkened Fire Chief Gutzmann's job was finished, his duties over, a job well done.

Somber ceremonies at the Craftsbury Academy gymnasium accorded full honors to Fire Chief Gutzmann who served 53 years in the Craftsbury Volunteer Fire Department, of which more than four decades were service as Fire Chief. His services carried forward the full tradition of a firefighter's last call. The academy gymnasium reverberated with the mournful keening of bagpiper Dan Fagan. An honor gauntlet of 70 fire fighters from across the area communities stood in quiet respect along the academy walls. His empty boots, uniform, and helmet rested on the small podium in silence amidst the flowers and firefighter's tools. A video of photographs taken from early moments in his life and family played silently on the side of the podium.

Rev. Deborah McKinley of the East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church and Chaplain to the Craftsbury Volunteer Fire Department officiated.

She said Chief Gutzmann was a teacher, fire chief, select board member, friend, community member, husband, brother, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, who served his community in many ways. Although he was a hard taskmaster, he motivated by challenges, never accepting what was offered as enough until the best effort was brought forth.

"When he was a young man, he joined the fire department because it was the right thing to do. When your community needed you, you stepped forward."

Rev. McKinley said, "All who were on the receiving end of those challenges speak highly of him. It came from his concern and love."

Gutzmann's grandchildren, speaking poignantly with humor and sadness, remembered their grandfather's love of camping, making up game rules as referee, and sledding at night at the Craftsbury Elementary School.

Acting Fire Chief Eric Britton memorialized Chief Gutzmann in a moving tribute.

He said, "You understand suddenly what is missing in your life after he left. He was an institution of knowledge. We took him for granted. He had answers to every question, and his experience is the prism we will look

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photo by Doug McClure

Initial work by Montgomery's St. Onge construction begins on November 8, one day after the Wolcott Select Board approves the company's bid for installing a temporary bridge.

Few New Leads in Double Homicide Investigation

by Michael Bielawski

WOODBURY – Just about two weeks after a double homicide rattled the Woodbury region, rumors and speculation are abundant and all eyes are on the state police to provide some answers.

Late at night on October 30, just about a mile east of Sabin Pond's picturesque quiet scenery along Route 14, two fires were started at homes along Bliss Road.

After firefighters put out the fires, the bodies were discovered.

The victims have officially been identified as David Thompson, 48, and Carol Fradette, 29. Police reports revealed that Thompson died from multiple gunshots and Fradette died from a gunshot and blunt force.

On Tuesday morning, Essex Police Barracks spokesman Adam Silverman said, "the investigation remains active and ongoing." He asked that anyone with information about the crimes contact the state police.

There have not been any new state police press release since Thompson was officially identified as a victim a week ago.

Local and regional media have run multiple stories, often with new details popping up. A WCAX report indicated that the two victims had been dating for about ten years.

Washington County State's Attorney Rory Thibault acknowledged unconfirmed reports that the couple were involved in drug culture and business, but he emphasized "that doesn't undermine the value of their life."

Select Board member Brian Shatney runs Shatney's Garage in the village and he hears how

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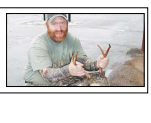
In Sports, *10*
Deer Report



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