



Evolution work at the Depot recently unearthed a gravesite, bringing work to a halt as the Hardwick Historical Society (HHS) and Mary Bracy worked to determine if something else might be in the ground. It appears the stone was just discarded, however, and the main question is actually buried in New York. The stone has been positioned by the Section House. No human remains expected, according to HHS President Elizabeth Dow.

Jeudevine Updates, and a Grave Discovery

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At the brief Hardwick Select Board meeting on September 5, the board received an update on the progress of the Jeudevine Library expansion project, including a heads-up to Town Manager Shaun Fielder on his potential kissing date with a pig, lewd from Road Foreman Tom Fadden about trucks, and got news from Elizabeth Dow about a surprising find during excavation work at the Depot. The board also heard from and appointed two new Union School Board members.

The good news the Jeudevine brought to the meeting was that their fundraising process was moving at a deliberate pace and is on track, though the project is likely not going to begin before 2020, according to Board of Trustees Chair Jodi Lew-Smith. Of the two primary fundraising

activities planned for the expansion, one involves kissing a pig and thus far Fielder has the most votes for that but he's not a pig. A second fundraising avenue Lew-Smith described would involve fundraising from outside the immediate area using a "collaborative approach." That fundraising would present the library as a valued community resource and demonstrate how investments in the library translated to broader community opportunities. She said the library was working on a letter for that fundraising option and wanted the select board to offer a testimonial on how the library impacted the community. Board member Elizabeth Dow added that she had seen a state study that showed positive impact of libraries on communities in Vermont. Lew-Smith said she would pursue sourcing that research.

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Robitille Makes Second Bid for Appeal

by Doug McClure

ST. JOHNSBURY — Following the Vermont Supreme Court's May rejection of a first appeal, Melissa Robitille has filed a petition with the Chelmsford Superior Court to have her 2017 conviction overturned, citing ineffective legal counsel. Robitille, 43, was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter in the 2014 alcohol-poisoning death of her 13-year-old son, Isaac.

According to the medical examiner, Isaac died on August 21, 2014 due to alcohol toxicity associated with existing medical conditions. Prosecutors successfully argued that Isaac, who weighed 35 pounds at time of death, was given vodka by Robitille and

then-boyfriend Walter Richters via his feeding tube because the child was being disruptive. Richters pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter, but Robitille, who connected the feeding tube, was found to have primary responsibility for the boy's death.

In her rejected appeal, Robitille argued that the trial court had restricted cross-examination of the state's key witnesses, and had failed to provide jurors with crucial instructions. The Supreme Court disagreed, finding there is "no basis for disturbing the jury's conclusion that defendant was guilty."

Robitille is currently serving a sentence of 4-12 years at the Chelmsford Regional Correctional Facility in South Burlington.



Power Basket owners Finn (left) and Nora (right) Hamilton at the official storefront opening of the refitted Power Basket on Saturday, September 7. The photo is by Jodi Lew-Smith.

Flower Basket Opens Storefront

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Just a few short months after purchasing the Flower Basket, the long-running Hardwick florist business, Nora and Finn Hamilton officially opened the doors to a revamped storefront on Saturday, September 7.

Much of what the couple had planned for the business in July has come to fruition, with some new touches. Some improvements have been delayed due to business that had even been hoped for. Both said Hardwick residents have proven reliable customers with a keen eye for detail and quality.

"Part of why we're a little bit behind is we've been so busy with online and phone orders," said Finn.

Helping the Hamiltons out with the literal heavy lifting are the two oldest Hamiltons, Finn said. "None of this store would be here without them." As a steady stream of customers, Finn said, the mostly-renovated space, the Williams were struggling with balloons whose strings refused to come untangled. Nora

patiently freed the balloons from the mostly-renovated space, the Williams were struggling with balloons whose strings refused to come untangled. Nora said she had some math issues and said discussion about which colors she should paint up. A young girl whose mother has taken advantage of the mums on offer out front had done math in her head and announced the total the Williams two first customers would be \$10, which prompted a customer to bring up Woodbury Elementary's good mathematics support, the project as project manager, and The Design Group provided architectural services.

A back wall on the pavilion will have interpretive plaques honoring the working landscape of the past, including the Woodbury Granite Company, which was in town and Edison bolts. Bright

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO — There are no more cows at the Gebbie's Maple Farm. Peter and Sandra Gebbie had previously sold their cows to Kelly Langford Richardson. On September 4, the 199 cows were sold at auction, bringing to a close — at least for now — the Gebbie's multi-generational dairy operation.

"We had good and bad times in our many years, but never dreamed failure was possible," Peter, a 67-year-old dairy retiree of the last years, and the personal problems of the young farmers we finished led to this auction."

Peter added that "there is no extra money in dairy farming for retirement funds. The cows, the machinery, and the farm are our 401K."

"Though specific challenges for dairy farms can vary, the Gebbie's story reflects a wider pattern seen across the state. Since 2010, there has been a 25% decline in the number of commercial dairy farms in Vermont, while the average number of cows per farm has increased. In a January 2019 report, the Vermont Milk Commission found that dairy farming is 'continually challenged with milk prices, changing weather patterns, and generational change. Milk prices, according to the January report, are in their fourth year of being below the total cost of production."

Despite these challenges, the report found that the dairy industry remains the largest form of agriculture and agricultural production in the state, making up

73% of total agricultural receipts.

The Gebbies have been farming for live production raising goats, producing maple syrup, and milking cows on their 400 acres at the top of Gebbie Road.

Peter said the farm will continue to operate into the future, "in

some form. Maybe raising beef, or even growing hemp."

The Gebbies are still actively looking for someone to take over the operation. "Hopefully, another young farmer will eventually take the farm into future generations," he said.

Yellow Barn Has 'No Significant Impact' on Wetlands

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — The Town of Hardwick has released its findings about the proposed Yellow Barn Project's impact on wetlands. The project planners explained in detail how the planning had made adjustments to its own plans, and the state had made its own corrections in floodplain mapping. As a result, the findings "satisfy all regulatory and permit requirements" in the overall project process, Town Manager Shaun Fielder said in the document on hardwick.org.

Executive Order 11990 and Executive Order 11994, which require federal agencies to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts on wetlands. In that regard, the town had to make an assessment of the impact of the proposed project on parts of its 4.7 acre site on wetlands and floodplains. The assessment determined the "adaptive reuse of a mid-19th century barn" previously made for the Greensboro Garage, and how as

part of the plan that barn will be "retained and restored." It noted the structure is not on wetlands or the buffer zone.

The wetlands in question are described as Shallow Emergent Marsh containing a stream, with a total land area of approximately 1.2 acres. Importantly, the study found this wetland is not part of a wetland complex. The land tends to flood during high-water events on the Lamoille River, according to the study.

In assessing the viability of the site for the Yellow Barn, the town did a feasibility study in 2018 and discovered the site was "optimal" for the project, with no other options for "redevelopment of this scale." Recognizing concerns over wetlands intrusion, project planners reduced the "building envelope by roughly 60%" which, according to those planners, addressed concerns over potential negative impacts while keeping the site viable for the development. In addition, during the

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photo by Vanessa Fowler. Eric Brown (#229) and Jodi Schwartz (#228) joined 48 other riders in the Cabot Ride the Ridge 50km event held September 8. Proceeds from the event benefit the Cabot Memorial Program.

Atkins Field Pavilion Opening Sept. 28

by Doug McClure

The project got financial support from the United States Department of Agriculture Community Facilities Program, the Vermont Recreation Facilities Program and 200 other individual donors, organizations and local businesses. HELM Construction Solutions supported the project as project manager, and The Design Group provided architectural services.

A back wall on the pavilion will have interpretive plaques honoring the working landscape of the past, including the Woodbury Granite Company, which was in town and Edison bolts. Bright

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Ten Students Transfer from Woodbury to Hardwick

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — According to a report from the Vermont State Board of Education, 10 students are set to combine schools into larger administrative districts. With the ability for students to transfer between district schools, District 10, which includes Woodbury and Greensboro, is set to combine with District 11, which includes Hardwick and Stannard. Ten students who were attending Woodbury Elementary School are now attending Hardwick Elementary School.

The students are set to transfer to Hardwick Elementary School, which is about 10 miles apart, and their respective school boards (now disbanded) are set to meet for the first time. The new merger had for the first time, both Nora and Finn said. If anything, the new limitations to bring new ideas to life is time.

Last year, the state board of education intervened and mandated the formation of the OS-10ED, which officially became operational this past July 1 under a new combined school board.

OS-10 Superintendent Adam Rosenberg said that losing these students was a challenge. "We're in the process of designing an innovative school district, each of whose three cam-

pus will potentially be able to offer something different to students, based on their learning needs, learning styles and interests."

OS-10 Board Chair Katharine Lagana was also a member of the disbanded Hardwick School Board. "Our plan is to continue to support all three campuses, and ultimately any big decision to close a campus remains with the electorate."

"Some of these students are from Woodbury families who used to pass HES Hardwick Elementary School on their way to Woodbury HS and for when they were in the school."

"We are in the incipient stages of designing an innovative school district, each of whose three cam-

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