

## Town Considers Water Rate Adjustments

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Hardwick Electric Department (HED) commissioner David Mitchell updated HED's status for the Hardwick Select Board at the board's September 17 meeting. The board also heard from Positive P's John Rivetto on ideas to "avoid the winter dip" in village business. Hardwick Police Department Chief Aaron Cochran described the September 17 shooting sting, covered in a separate article. The board also received an analysis of the water and sewer situation.

Town clerk Abigail Miller, town manager Shana Fidler, and select board member Lucian Avery have been "working with a lot of spreadsheet" to analyze the water and sewer estimated rates, which worked out close to expectations, according to Fidler.

"It is important," said Fidler, "for folks to know that to balance the budget coming off the first year were adjustments, but we were close."

Business manager Casey Lowell said the proposed annual residential and commercial water rates will be \$7.18 to \$7.72 per quarter at the lowest tier, and the commercial/average (50,000 gallons rate) will be \$142.60 to \$144.60. Overage beyond 10,000 gallons increased from \$0.05 to \$0.07 per gallon. Sewer rates will rise from \$11.75 to \$12.50 per quarter for residential and commercial properties, and from \$221.50 to \$225 for commercial/residential. Overage increasing from \$0.0075 to \$0.01 per gallon. All rates are posted at the town's website, hardwickvt.org.

Positive P's Rivetto presented a litany of ideas to keep the local engine moving during

the slow months of the year. "He asked what could be done to attract snowmobilers into the village. Getting those people downtown, missed Rivetto, could do a lot for Hardwick during the winter months."

"How do you get access for people rolling through town to have mountain adventures?" Rivetto asked.

Select board vice chair Donna Hale said he would reach out to the local snowmobile club about joining forces. Select board chair Eric Renick said he was interested in Rivetto's perspective as a summer visitor. Rivetto said that, from his observation as a summer visitor, "the [Lanols is awesome], and referenced the Hardwick Trails as another potential tourist draw."

"How do you bring all those things together — adventure sports, dirt biking, the incredible land — just how do we get the message out there and tie it all together? How do we make it happen?" Rivetto asked. The here we were close."

Mitchell gave an update for HED, which featured a small repair that mushroomed. A worker discovered a broken turbine part which required "dewatering for half, but then the gate wouldn't close."

"We had to hire superintendents to see why the gate wouldn't close," he said. He paused dramatically, laid out a small map of the town, and Mitchell responded, "They found a chunk of concrete in the turbine." Mitchell said the gate had been completed and everything was now operational. He added that managers of the solar projects are "prepping up a lot of work" and the H11

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Hardwick students lead a march through Hardwick to bring attention and action to the climate crisis. Hundreds of students, parents and community members joined the march on Friday from Hazen Union to Atkins Field.



Students and community members assembled at the Atkins Field pavilion after marching through town, where they listened to speakers talk about climate change.

## Students Walk for World-Wide Climate Action

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — More than 140 Hazen Union students walked out of class on Friday to participate in a worldwide Climate Strike to demand urgent government action to address climate change.

According to actionnetwork.org, one of the organizers of climate strikes in the United States, "On September 20, three days before the UN Climate Summit in NYC, young people and adults will strike all across the US and world to demand transformative action to be taken to address the climate crisis."

According to a Hazen Union estimate, 140 high school and middle school students joined the protest. Students from Lakeview and other area schools joined the strike.

The student protesters were joined by community members in a show of solidarity. The protesters made their way from the Hazen campus down Main Street and on to Atkins Field. Officers from the Hardwick Police Department were on hand, but the march was peaceful and interaction between police and protesters was limited to greetings such as a fist bump

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between an officer and a student. Despite traffic being impeded briefly, motorists were generally supportive, including a driver in a fuel delivery truck who gave the kids a thumbs-up.

The event was spearheaded by Hazen student Kai Gilbert, who dismissed the notion that the protest was politically motivated. "This is not about politics," she said, speaking underneath the new Pavilion at Atkins field. "This is a question of life, and it's not just for me."

Every animal, every wild place, we have destroyed — as an ecosystem."

Rep. Chip Troneo (D-Calais, H11-2) of Stannard spoke at the event and Gilbert and the students

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to "roam up with us on long days," which he said had helped pass legislation for the upcoming ban on plastic bags, styrofoam containers, and straws. He noted each of those items separately, and with each one a cheer rose from under the packed Pavilion.

Troneo said while "we live in a place that has been exceptional" in terms of local government, he was disappointed that the students in Vermont. When you go out into the job market, you are going to

see a lot more green jobs."

Buffalo Mountain Co-Op's new General Manager, Emily Hersher, followed Troneo and said the "energy here is amazing."

Black Dirt Farm's Tom Gilbert, Knif father, spoke next. "It's not going to be policymakers or regulators or bureaucrats making the change, we're talking about systemic change," he told the gathered protesters. "The solution is not simple, we have to get back to fundamentals. We have a marketplace system, we need to rebuild society in the image of an ecosystem."

Speaking afterwards, Kai Gilbert said the strike had been two weeks in the planning and, as a senior now, some juniors and younger students are becoming involved. "We're not done," added Senior Audrey Grant, who also helped plan the event. "We're not satisfied."

"I really proud of our community," Kai Gilbert said. "It gives me hope and it gives me faith."

Grant said some teachers were upset that "we have to take class time" but that frustration was less directed at the students than at the climate crisis that

## Sting Operation Leads to Nine Arrests

by Doug McClure



Forest Foster (seated, second from right) and Denise Fiedler (seated, far right) during arrest proceedings at Caladenia Court in St. Albans.

2007 photo by David Wellington, Caladenia Record

Forest Foster (seated, second from right) and Denise Fiedler (seated, far right) during arrest proceedings at Caladenia Court in St. Albans.

Assisting agencies included Morrisville PD, Barre Town PD, Washington County Sheriff's Department, Caladenia County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Marshals, Vermont State Police, and Vermont State Police.

In thirty-six pages of affidavits, the Hardwick Police Department describes the work leading up to the apprehensions in meticulous detail. Using HED's own resources and the assistance of Cooperating Individuals (CIs), HPP put together a successful operation which led to arrests of all suspects without incident. In the HPP affidavits, multiple questions are made of suspects using Facebook and text messages to see if they

The affidavits describe locations across Caladenia County as well as in Hardwick where alleged looks took place.

Kevin Fiedler was arrested on six counts, two for sale of firearms, two for selling fake heroin, and one for driving with a criminally suspended license (D188 Criminal).

Denise Fiedler, Kevin's sister, Denise Fiedler is alleged to have sold and dispensed fentanyl, all individuals had male.

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## Public Transportation Coming to Woodbury?

by Michael Bielawski

WOODBURY — Public transportation could be expanding one of the most rural municipalities in the state.

Nick Augustine of Rural Community Transportation Inc., RCTI, was at Monday's select board meeting to describe RCTI's

"RCTI is all-fare-free, so anytime you step on an RCTI bus it doesn't hurt anybody's wallet," he said. "It costs you through your taxpayer dollars."

The operation will start October 1, and run twice a day Monday through Friday. The service schedule may be suitable for commuters, but less convenient for those with two other town locations.

There will be a stop in the village and possibly a stop by the town offices near the large white church. A trip to Montpelier would be a round-trip to East Montpelier, but Barre would be a direct ride.

The board was receptive to the proposal.

"It's pretty expensive for some people to drive themselves back and forth to Montpelier every day," said board member Brian Shattuck. "We have a few seniors, and it's a nice thing to do."

RCTI will want to coordinate with Green Mountain Transit,

which already serves parts of town. State grant money will likely be required.

A resident came in to inform the board that he was not happy with the current tax situation and level of services — especially road upkeep — and therefore he was going to be putting his full taxes this year.

Board chair Michael Gray responded by noting most of the tax increase arose because Woodbury's school was not a result of its recent administrative merger with the Hardwick and Lakeview elementary school districts.

"The majority of that rise in taxes came from the school tax and most of that is because we are paying for two other town locations, building expenses and other education costs," Gray said.

This issue is an example of one of the main legal arguments used in legal cases over the state's school merger law. It requires communities to pay for transportation the voters never approved.

There was an update on the replacement of an underground bus tank at the town garage. "We have to get that tank out of the ground as soon as possible in legal cases over the state's school merger law. It requires communities to pay for transportation the voters never approved."

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## Heating Program Assistance Available

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Each winter, thousands of low-income Vermont citizens struggle to pay significant heating costs. Now, the state is working to inform them that financial help is available.

Rep. Joseph "Chip" Troneo, D-Stannard, spoke with The Gazette about the importance of the program, known as LIHEAP, or the Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program.

"When you are a low-income person and your oil tank is running empty (you need help)," he said. He noted that 200 gallons of oil currently costs over \$1,000.

Troneo said that people who are struggling to pay their heating bills are compromising their well-being.

## Plainfield Co-op Future Uncertain

by Michael Bielawski

PLAINFIELD — The Plainfield Co-op is taking steps to rebound from a tough financial situation.

The co-op's annual report, released earlier this year, found the community-owned store had lost nearly \$46,000 in 2018. The group held a members' meeting on Saturday at the Plainfield Opera House to propose strategies for returning the business to solvency. Approximately 60 people attended.

Audrey Robinson, the meeting's facilitator, noted that the store is \$140,000 in the black and \$100,000 in the bank, but she cautioned that the news was not as good as it seemed.

"The lost revenue is basically the

store is being lifted into the black on the backs of volunteer staff," Robinson said. "It's good for the short run, it's not good for the long run."

Proposals discussed at the meeting included moving the co-op to a more visible location on Route 2, an ownership partnership with Hunger Mountain Co-op in Montpelier, acquiring an employee-owned business model, or keeping the current location and business model while finding ways to increase performance. Members voted on each proposal.

The Hunger Mountain partnership proposal received at least 41 votes, with advocates suggesting benefits could include greater

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The Plainfield Co-op members inside the store, some holding signs, at a special meeting at the Plainfield Opera House on Saturday afternoon.

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NEW  
LAKEVIEW STAFF