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\$4 Million School Budget Approved

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY — The School District Annual Meeting kicked off at 9 a.m. last week under Moderator Jeanine's gavel and lasted until 10:45 a.m. A new steering committee, sound system, primary voting booths, and colorful displays created a festive atmosphere.

School District Treasurer and Clerk Yvette Brown was elected without opposition, and her stipend of \$4,997.15 was approved. Incumbent Chris Allen and Michelle Menard voted for a three-year term, with Allen winning on a 59-32 vote. Menard, nominated again for a two-year term, ran unopposed.

Missing budget details, confining budget presentation, and need for clarification on the proposed \$4,014,955 school budget drew no new voter ire, but was subsequently approved on an 89 Yes to 43 No vote. Principal Merri Greenia reported the school has 206 students, pre-K to grade 12.

The \$4,014,955 school budget

draw questions from resident Carolyn Ryan. The school district budget was confusing and lacked details as to Craftsbury's portions of the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) budget in various categories. Ryan questioned expenditures for a food-service position and legal expenses of \$137,348 in the School Board category on the OSSU budget, when the Craftsbury school directors receive no stipend.

"No school salaries are listed and that should be in the report," she said. "This is looking as if we are signing on a blank check. We are always being told that centralizing services would save us money, but, yet, it always lands up costing us more."

Principal Greenia explained the state has new accounting procedures, the report reflects those changes. Separate line items were moved into other categories. OSSU Treasurer Adam Rosenberg explained information on all salaries is on the OSSU website, as is all budget details.

See SCHOOL, 6



The Hardwick Police Department's newest acquisition is a hybrid Ford Explorer which has not yet been badged.

Hardwick Select Board Gets Organized

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Two days after Town Meeting and with a newly-elected member, Ceilidh Gallows-Kane, the Hardwick Select Board set about its organizational tasks. Gallows-Kane ran against former vice chair Danny Hale and won by a vote of 339-279.

The board thanked Hale for his service as its second-long-serving board member at the time. Chair Eric Renick said, "Thanks to Danny Hale for his recent years service. He's been super helpful on the board, especially around the capital equipment fund, trails, lots of stuff... [Hale] assures me he's going to keep working for the town as a private citizen. The board later appointed Hale as the town's representative for the Hardwick/Woodbury Rail Trail.

The board itself voted unanimously to continue with Renick as Chair. He responded, "Thank you...I think... With Renick now officially leading the meeting, the board next elected Elizabeth Dove as the new Vice Chair.

A fleet of appointments awaited the board for multiple offices: Aaron Cochran, Civil Defense/Emergency Management Coordinator; Dean Mercier, Animal Control Officer; Shari Cornish, CVSWMD Representative; Shaun Fielder, Town Services Officer; Elizabeth Dow, Agent to Convey Real Estate; Shari Cornish, Board Representative to Sign Warrants; Shari Cornish, NEAETS Board Representative; Eric Renick, Lamelle Valley Rail Trails Committee Representative; Joe Brosseau, Holly Bolio, Jennifer Groves, Rhonda Rawson and Ceilidh Gallows-Kane, Town Recreation Committee; Shaun Fielder, Town Safety Officer; Maya McCoy, Town Website Coordinator; Shari Cornish, Town Representative for the NYDA; Danny Hale, Hardwick/Woodbury Rail Trail; Richard Brochu, Town Health Officer; and Shaun Fielder, Deputy Health Officer. The board had no issue with those appointments and approved all.

See ORGANIZED, 4

Pedestrian Bridge Moves Forward

by Will Walters

PLAINFIELD — Some progress was made on the pedestrian bridge project when bids were opened on Feb. 21 by Town Clerk Linda Wells. An extended deadline for bids, however, was set for Feb. 28, because there were two addenda to the bid request from the Agency of Transportation (AOT). Wells forwarded the bids to Andrea Day, the engineer from the Duffresne Group, who is handling the construction part of the project.

Day said Agency of Transportation Project Supervisor Ross Gouin wanted a week's delay in announcing the bids to the contractors. Town Grant Administrator Merrill reported that AOT had forwarded pre-bid questions to Day. Day will delay

responding to the bids because contractors' bids will be dependent in part on the answers to the questions from AOT.

Pat Fother, former pedestrian bridge project manager, has left his position at Sterling Management, said chair Alexandra Thayer. However, he attended the pre-bid meeting where a question was raised as to whether there should be an extension in the time allotted for bid responses to be received.

Day told Merrill that Gouin wanted to have a week's delay, but since Merrill did not hear that decision from Gouin, Thayer contacted him by telephone for him to participate in the meeting and tell the select board directly of his request. Gouin said Day was waiting for responses to B, D, E.

See BRIDGE, 6

Battle of the Badges Resumes March 28

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — On March 28, the fourth annual Battle of the Badges charitable basketball games return to Hardwick at both the Hazen Union and Hardwick Elementary gyms.

Organizer and Hardwick Police Department Detective Kevin Leboe said the friendly competition involves a wide range of

first responders, including police and fire, and people in related jobs such as states' attorneys and corrections officers. He said that the bulk of the proceeds from the games will go to the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge, with a smaller amount going to the Samantha Brochu Scholarship Fund.

Corporate sponsors this year include Community Bank, N.A.,

Smith's Store in Greensboro, Noyle W. Johnson Insurance and Lamelle Valley Ford. Those sponsors have donated in excess of the \$5,000 goal, Leboe said. Additionally, the Village Restaurant is handling the food at Hazen. Dr. Leboe said, "This is a huge help." He noted that Greensboro Fire Chief Dave Brochu and Wendy Brochu "do a fantastic job of taking care of the gym after the tournament."

Leboe explained that one goal of the games is to help these individuals build rapport with one another. He said, "At a crime scene or an accident scene, there are a lot of different people that get involved to interact... the idea is that all will come together in a charitable tournament like this, so everybody gets to know each other a lot better, and it's an much easier when you're on the scene if you know them. It just gives you a rapport with people that you wouldn't necessarily have [otherwise]."

At the same time, he noted that the games will present these first responders to the community in a context that "it does not involve an emergency. It humanizes us," said Leboe.

He explained that he started the Battle of the Badges four years ago. "There really isn't anything like this statewide," he said. "It's a great cause that comes out of Morrisville, Stowe and Burlington won the games." Teams are not necessarily from one town or one group of individuals. Our team has a freeman from Brattleboro. We try to get

everybody together," he continued.

Leboe said the games are good for area businesses. "It's an opportunity to bring business to town. Last year, all the restaurants commented that they saw a bump in business. It's a lot of people from out-of-town, they're stopping and eating at the restaurants. And then it's an idea to connect with the community in a different way."

Seven games will be held at Hazen and two at Hardwick Elementary. The eight teams will compete in a first round, starting at 9 a.m., then the winners of those games will move on to a second round of games. The losers of those two would play two consolation games at Hardwick Elementary. Eventually, the final two teams will play a championship game at Hazen, which will be about 8:30 p.m.

Leboe said the first responders' schools make a compact schedule necessary. Another challenge lies in getting referees to donate their time around the community in Union (AAU) basketball season. "Fortunately," Leboe said, "the referees are people that we know, some are former refs and some refs do donate their time as well." The Battle of the Badges is a great cause. We hope we get as big a turnout as possible. It's great to see people in our area around the community come out for it. Hope Lodge comes down and helps with handling the donations money at the door. They also bring down some shirts, sweaters and other things that they sell."



Hardwick/Wolcott Fire Department player, Jack Jones (left) drives to the basket while teammate Fernon Hamblin (right) follows the action and Norwich Cadet Jonathan Loughlin (right) closes in on defense. Eight teams competed in the 3rd Annual Battle of the Badges Tournament held at Hazen Union last year. This year's tournament will be held on March 28.

In Towns, 2

4-HERS PARTICIPATE IN DARY BOWL QUIZ

In Sports, 8

ESOSBURG HANDLES WILDCATS DEFENSE

In Arts, 6

CONNELLY PHOTOGRAPHS A NARRATION OF IRELAND



Local store shelves stripped of hand sanitizer. photo by Doug McClure

Schools Keep a Close Eye on COVID-19

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — COVID-19 is being monitored by the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU), said Superintendent Adam Rosenberg. He said OSSU is following the lead of the Agency of Education (AOE). In a webinar, Rosenberg said guidance about when and where to close schools might come imminently from the AOE. Out of an abundance of caution, Rosenberg said guidance about when and where to close schools might come imminently from the AOE. Out of an abundance of caution, Rosenberg said guidance about when and where to close schools might come imminently from the AOE.

The school's nurses' office will begin monitoring students who arrive to make sure they are not running a temperature. A student who has a fever will be sent home until fever-free for 24 hours. CA will also begin paying close attention to absenteeism and following up with parents to see why students are out of school.

At Hazen Union, indications are that the much-anticipated trip to Ireland must be postponed. In discussions at Monday night's school board meeting, beyond the risk of exposure to COVID-19 while traveling, another likely situation

might be running into quarantine for two weeks at either end of the trip. Dublin has canceled its St. Patrick's Day Parade, and some countries have begun quarantining inbound travelers.

Postponing will likely mean losing \$850 per student, as that cost is non-refundable airfare. Choral Director Talan Bryant is working with the travel agent to see what can be done. If the trip is postponed, four seniors would have graduated by the time the trip takes place and will not be able to go.

See EYE, 4

One school taking extra precautions is Craftsbury Academy (CA). In a letter to parents, Principal Merri Greenia explained, "A Craftsbury staff member recently returned from northern Italy. Out of an abundance of caution, the staff member and I agreed on a two-week absence, allowing for the incubation period to pass before the staff member returns."

Greenia later emphasized that this person did not go into the school, but rather contacted her first. She said CA is augmenting its cleaning schedule, educating students, faculty and staff both about COVID-19 and handwashing.

VT DOH Issues Guidelines to Nursing Homes

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELLIER — Statistically speaking, those most at risk from COVID-19 are older people, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The first fatalities and many of the first infections of COVID-19 in the U.S. were at a nursing home in Kirkland, Washington.

When contacted, Craftsbury Community Care and Greensboro Nursing Home both said that they would have a comment about their precautionous room.

The State of Vermont has issued guidelines for long-term care facilities (LTCF) on COVID-19. At the Thursday press conference, the task force described those as similar to common-sense practices which people would normally take when "visiting grandma" during flu season. The state's recommendations are designed to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 being introduced into facilities and prevent the spread within facilities.

These guidelines are essentially similar to the Agency See GUIDELINES, 4



A media briefing on COVID-19 was held on March 5 by seven state officials left to right: Vermont Emergency Management Director Erica Bornemann, Vermont State Epidemiologist Patsy Kelso, Vermont Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine and Gov. Phil Scott.

COVID-19 Cases Creep Closer

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELLIER — Area residents awoke Sunday morning to find out that Vermont had its first presumptive positive case of the coronavirus disease, COVID-19.

A staffer at Craftsbury Academy is on voluntary self-quarantine due to recent travel. The Agency of Education (AOE) has issued guidelines for schools (see sidebar) and the Department of Health issued guidelines for long-term care facilities. As of this morning, Vermont has officially activated its State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

A man in Bennington was put into isolation at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, according to members of Vermont's new task force on COVID-19. The news came as no surprise to state officials; in just over two weeks, the number of people monitored for COVID-19 has jumped nearly tenfold, to 223. Vermont began testing for COVID-19 at its state labs last week. Gov. Phil Scott

clarified, "It's called presumptive because we're now awaiting final confirmation of this result from the CDC."

He said "I wanted to take a moment to assure Vermonters that this case was prepared to manage this case, and the Department of Health has already begun work to trace and monitor those who had been in contact with this individual."

The task force includes Gov. Scott; Vermont Health Commissioner Dr. Mark Levine; and representatives from Vermont Emergency Management (VTEMA); Vermont Department of Public Safety (DPS); Health, Human Resources, Buildings and General Services; Agency of Education (AOE); Agency of Human Services; Vermont National Guard; Vermont Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Coalition; E-911 Board; the Governor's Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

See CLOSER, 5

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