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photo by Emmett Avery

The former train depot in Greensboro Bend, which Mark Snyder has turned into his dwelling, sits on land owned by the State of Vermont. Snyder either has to sign a lease with the state or remove himself and the building, the state says.

Bend Depot in Long Limbo

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO BEND – Mark Snyder lives in and owns the historic train depot in Greensboro Bend. He is worried the state of Vermont will evict him because he does not own the land underneath.

This odd situation arose 20 years ago when the Town of Greensboro bought the building from the State of Vermont and then promptly sold it to Snyder's father, Richard. Since then, there has been no lease for the land under Snyder's building. Now the state wants a lease signed or Snyder and his depot to move elsewhere.

According to town documentation, Greensboro got involved with the property in 1978 when it signed a 10-year lease with the Vermont Agency Of Transportation (AOT). When that lease expired, the town began trying to purchase the depot. Greensboro's acquisition of the building was delayed over the next few years while the AOT came up with a lease agreement for the land underneath.

Meanwhile, Snyder's father was in talks with Greensboro to lease or buy the building once it was in town possession. For reasons that remain unclear, Greensboro lost all interest in owning the depot by the time the final purchase went through in 2000. The town sold the depot to Snyder's father for a dollar, just as it had received the property from the state shortly before. This was still without a ground lease.

For several years before the elder Snyder's purchase of the property, he had been restoring the depot with his own money and the town's approval, on the assumption that a ground lease would eventually be procured and a lease or buy agreement arranged with the town. The last town document is from Snyder's father, thanking the town clerk for sending him copies of the deed to the station, and saying that based on correspondence from the state, he is sure the state will not withhold a ground lease. A lease never materialized.

Snyder said he first moved into the depot as a caretaker for his dad. "How you could be enamored with Greensboro Bend is beyond me," he said, "but it's happened." He said it is the people that draw him to the place. The bend is a "solid little town that really has some of the best attributes of what an American town could have," he commented, "and, frankly, some of the worst." The threat to his home has had him on edge. "I'm not blaming the state, but I almost had two heart attacks because of the stress," he said. "It's trying to kill me."

On September 21, 2017, Snyder received a notice from the AOT informing him that he was occupying state property without authorization and that he needed to come into compliance either by signing a lease or by removing himself and the depot from the state's land. The most recent lease proposal from the state is unfair and at odds with the history and placement of the depot, according to Snyder and his lawyer David Kelley.

There are three main arguments that Snyder and Kelley make. The first problem they have is a clause in the proposed contract that would allow the state to terminate the lease without cause on 30 days' notice. This is a nonstarter, according to Kelley. The second issue for Snyder is the cost of the proposed lease, at $3,360 a year, he says it is more than he can afford and too much for the land given the depressed nature of the local economy and land values. The third argument is about the historical significance of the depot. Snyder views the building as an anchor for what is left of the downtown of Greensboro Bend, and a potential "meristem" for growth in the community once the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail reaches the town.

Both the state and Snyder

See DEPOT, 6

Superintendent Announces OSSU Schools Closure

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – On Sunday, March 15, parents of OSSU students received a voicemail from OSSU Superintendent Adam Rosenberg stating: "Earlier today Governor [Phil] Scott announced statewide school closure. After Tuesday, March 17 Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union schools will be closed until at least April 6 and may extend for a longer period…. student attendance at school Monday and Tuesday is a family decision. For these two days, OSSU attendance procedures will be waived and no student will be penalized for not attending.

We are working to assure meals and support services will be delivered as needed. We are also working to ensure that student learning is able to continue remotely. However, we acknowledge that given the circumstances learning opportunities will not be as robust as under normal circumstances. We are looking at this as a chance to experiment with online and other remote learning tools in an effort to cultivate learner agency and other transferable skills. In the end, we hope that this experience will yield new and innovative ways of delivering instruction. In the interim, please continue to implement best practices as recommended by the health dept. I will keep you posted as planned."

It was just Friday during a press briefing about COVID-19

See OSSU, 4

Coronavirus Action Taken by CCSU

by Will Walters

DANVILLE – Twinfield Union School in Marshfield and Cabot School in Cabot will be part of the seven schools in the Caledonia Central Supervisory Union that will close as of March 16. This is in accordance with Gov. Phil Scott's directive concerning school closings throughout the state in response to the corona virus emergency, said Superintendent Mark Tucker.

Tucker said in compliance with the Scott's proclamation, "We plan to start providing school meals (breakfast and lunch) to all students in all of our communities who wish to receive meals, starting on Wednesday. These meals will be provided free of charge regardless of individual student eligibility for free-and-reduced lunch. We will be delivering meals to family homes or allowing pickup at the school, at the family's discretion."

Starting March 23, Tucker said there will be programs in place to meet the Governor's requirement for "Continuity of Education." Depending on the student's age and the availability of internet service at the student's home ,the continuity requirement will be achieved through some combination of online instruction or traditional work packets.

The closure period originally ran from March 18 through April 3, Tucker said, and all school related activities are canceled and all use of school property for public events is prohibited. Scott said the initial period running to April 3 may be extended as conditions warrant. He noted that these actions are "intended to enforce social distancing by our students and community members and to prevent violations of restrictions on the size of gatherings, which initially was set at 250 persons but may soon be lowered to 50 persons."

School employees are being encouraged to work from home during the closure period, though some staff will be on-site for meal preparation and delivery in accordance with the Governor's directive. The school buildings will also be open at times for staff, but no children will be allowed in any of the school buildings at any time.

photo by June Pichel Cook

Craftsbury Academy student Phoebe Stoddard was named as a 2020 Billy Michal Student Leadership Award recipient to represent Vermont at the National WWII Museum ceremonies to be held in New Orleans in June. The award is given annually to one student from each state and the District of Columbia.

Craftsbury Student Represents Vermont in WWII Memorial

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY – Craftsbury Academy Junior Phoebe Stoddard, Vermont winner of the 2020 Billy Michal Student Leadership Award, heads to New Orleans in June. The Award is given to one student from each state who demonstrates the American Spirit in his/her community – leadership, teamwork, tolerance, creativity and perseverance. She is the daughter of John Stoddard and Jody Frey.

The young woman who has never been out of the Northeast Kingdom is excited about the New Orleans trip. The energy and spirit she demonstrates is not unlike the six-year-old Billy Michal from Zimmerman, Louisiana, who helped his one-room school win a statewide, scrap-paper collection contest during World War II.

Stoddard is on a mission to make her school and world a better place. On Saturday mornings at 4:30 a.m., she begins work at the C Village Store. The rest of the week, she is a dynamo of activity. Stoddard often leads whole-school weekly meetings and serves as student representative on the School Board and community Student Life Association. She has served as captain of both

See STUDENT, 4

photo by Doug McClure

Due to COVID-19's transmissibility and the space's tight quarters, the Hardwick Area Food Pantry is now serving clients outside on the lawn of St. John the Baptist Church. Volunteer Regina Troiano (left) and Food Pantry Director LauraLee Sweeney are assisting those in need. Sweeney said new signs are in order, and her goal is to make sure the Pantry keeps meeting the needs of clients through the duration of the pandemic.

Impact of Pandemic Quickly Hits Home

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – On the afternoon of Friday, March 13, Principal David Perrigo went on the PA and advised students to take home their Chromebooks, chargers, and anything else they might need, because "there is a chance we might not have school next week." At almost the same time, the Vermont General Assembly officially announced it would "suspend business at the close of business" to "limit the possibility that a state house viral infection could accelerate the spread of the virus to every community in Vermont."

Three hours later, Gov. Phil Scott declared a State of Emergency. Two days later, on Sunday, Gov. Scott ordered Vermont schools closed.

By Saturday, area residents hoping to run to the store for tissue had missed their chance. Panic buying of toilet paper caused many stores to sell out their entire inventory. Finding more sensible items like hand sanitizer and rubbing alcohol, even online, was almost impossible. Local stores, including Willey's Store, the Craftsbury General Store and Smith's Grocery offered on Facebook to arrange delivery of essentials for people who really need it. The Greensboro Garage posted on Facebook Sunday: "We are more than willing to pick up your car for service and deliver it back to your home. If at that time you need to have your groceries picked up or even gas put into your car while we have it, we

See IMPACT, 4

Business Leaders Say Local Support Will Pull Community Through

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK – There was no problem finding parking on Main Street on what normally would be a bustling Tuesday morning. Local business leaders were just hours from new restrictions to be implemented, including all restaurants must close or go take-out only by midafternoon until at least April 6, just like the schools.

The Village Restaurant – a social hub for the community – got its doors open for one last lunch-rush. Oldies played from the kitchen as locals gathered one more time, nearly everyone expressed encouragement to the staff. Owner Lynn DeLaricheliere said they're going to pull through this tough stretch.

"I'm going to do everything I can. We're going to be open regular hours for take-out. Effective tomorrow (Wednesday) we're going to do delivery. I will do delivery. We're going be open, we're going to be here, it's going to be a skeleton staff, but the same food. We're going to take care of the community that takes care of us."

Andrea Jones, co-owner of the Galaxy Bookshop, said the community has been buying books more than usual as they prepare for time in isolation. "It's been

See SUPPORT, 4

Hardwick Battens Down the Hatches

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – Town Manager Shaun Fielder said Hardwick is focusing on its emergency operations to meet the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. "At the town level, we're doing the steps to make sure the select board is informed. I'm working very closely with [Police Chief] Aaron [Cochran] and [Fire Chief and Roads Foreman] Tom [Padden], and Hardwick Rescue," he explained.

He said those communications are working. The town is aiming to balance its response to the situation's severity. When it comes to nonessential services, a lot of the town's day-to-day business services can only be done in person.

"We're looking at a similar approach to the Jeudevine," continued Fielder. "Limiting public access. Services will keep going. We're also looking out for the interests of our town employees and trying to do our part to

See HATCHES, 6

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Cadet Caden Giroux (left) of the Berlin Fire Department rescues Woodbury Fire Department firefighter Caleb Cerutti (right) while others pull them to safety during an ice-water rescue training held at Woodbury Lake March 14. Members of the Craftsbury and Berlin Fire Departments attended the training hosted by the Woodbury Fire Department.

Businesses Reach Out, Schools Hunker Down

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY – Businesses have begun to reach out to alleviate the personal toll and impacts on community members who are unable to access facilities. Schools were closed per order of Governor Phil Scott and public gatherings have been limited in numbers or canceled.

Last week, the Craftsbury General Store posted an announcement of measures to help those needing extra support that were being put into place. Curbside pickup of groceries, bulk buying and home delivery for special cases is in the offing. Several community members have stepped forward to help with deliveries.

On Wednesday night specials, Kit Bascom, said, "We are offering curbside pickup and have deliveries as an option. Someone will be on the porch, and we can hand your dinner through your car window."

About eight people had signed up for the bulk-buying items last week. Orders are processed weekly with more being processed this week. To date, suppliers are still

See HUNKER, 6

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In Sports, *8*

BAKER NAMED TO LEAGUE FIRST TEAM

In Towns, *2*

4-HERS PARTICIPATE IN DAIRY BOWL QUIZ

In Local, *3*

HEAD START VISITS GMTCC SUGARHOUSE