



photo by Vanessa Fournier

Matt Hayden (left) of Hardwick picks up his order on the curb from Lynn Delacretelle, owner of The Hardwick Village Restaurant. Delacretelle started the phone-pick up service after the statewide order for all restaurants to cease on-site service was given by Gov. Phil Scott on March 17.

Residents Question Goddard Plan

by Michael Bielawski

PLAINFIELD — There was a special online select board meeting on Monday evening for residents to ask questions and voice concerns regarding a plan to bring 100 coronavirus-infected persons to live on the campus while they recover from the virus. Kerry Sleeper, Vermont's commissioner for the Department of Public Safety, fielded most of the questions. Many of the questions centered on who are these people, who is responsible for keeping them on campus, and what they have any serious criminal or behavioral records?

Sleeper emphasized that these are not dangerous people who have backgrounds of concern. "They are already living in communities and have demonstrated they are capable of living in communities. It's just because they are sick that they need this short-term isolation facility," he said. Town Health Officer Bayle Sloss emphasized that each individual coming to the campus is to be held liable for any actions they take.

Wolcott Issues 'Emergency Operations Directive'

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT — At the regularly scheduled April 1 meeting, the Wolcott Select Board issued a directive with a series of measures designed to "to protect town employees and to protect the citizens of Wolcott," according to board member Kurt Klein. "Every individual is that the virus over the next three to four weeks will increase significantly."

The board also discussed several bills for road sand and awarded a bid for fuel to Bourne's Energy due to much lower prices. Roads Commissioner Lucien Gravel formally announced the new hire for the road crew, Joe Handley, and said work is in limbo because repairs are not classified as essential labor.

hardwickgazette.com

Craftsbury Schools Humming in New Mode

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY — Craftsbury Schools Principal Merri Greenia is very upbeat about the implementation of an altered educational dynamic as students and staff continue their lock-down from the physical buildings. The school serves 200 students, pre-K through grade 12.

"All teachers are working from home," Greenia said. "With pre-kindergarten through grade 5, most of the work is provided through learning packets every other week. In all other grades, online instruction is in place. Students are working from home."

Greenia said, "I am incredibly impressed with the kids, families and staff in doing this work, having to do it with two days' notice. Now the whole educational system is going to change. Teachers are putting plans together; kids are working hard."

On Wednesday, students drop off and pick up their work projects and packets at the Craftsbury Academy and Elementary School. Online work is being conducted through Google Classroom. Families were sent mailings on how to sign up. Greenia said that teachers are the biggest problem. "The Orleans County Superintendent Union (OSSU) teachers are doing an amazing job of setting up and work through technology challenges."

Some students have spotty or poor internet in places or lack internet access altogether. Although some companies are giving free internet, the wait time is significant. The Craftsbury OSSU website lists special education services, accessing meals during school hours, external resources, accessing internet services, teacher video and worry/flexibility resources. "Teachers are working hard," Greenia said, "primarily through the Google suite, Google Classroom. They are also using Google Meet."

A first-grade meeting was held on Monday where students could share what they are doing. Most teachers are using small group tutoring and some full-class sessions are held. Greenia said the school has a good tracking system which follows the progression of each student and engagement with students.

The system has three teacher teams and one student team and high school. "Each team has meetings twice a week," Greenia said. "They follow up with successes, issues, and do problem solving together."

In art classes, students share their work visually. In math, small group tutoring has worked very well. In science, students work in teams on projects.

Social distancing is a big concern and using a technology that lets students see each other's faces is important, Greenia said. The school has staff assigned to some students to ensure that they are okay.

Craftsbury and Wolcott have joined forces to ensure students in both towns maintain their ability to access meals. Meals are being delivered three days a week. "The school is doing a great job of ensuring that students are being served in both towns."

Craftsbury School Board Chair Harry Hamlin is giving his admiration for the staff and faculty. "The staff and teachers have done an amazing job. He urged everyone to view the video the faculty made that is on the Craftsbury Schools website."

Greensboro Prepares for Emergency

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO — Like many other towns in the region, Greensboro is preparing for the potential onslaught of COVID-19's arrival. This means creating an organizational structure to disseminate information and coordinate resources.

Greensboro has partnered with Stannard to create the Emergency Response Team (ERT). The response team is made up of representatives from local organizations. Among the organizers are Peter Romans, chair of the Greensboro Select Board; Carol Fairbank, executive director of SPAIRK and communications lead for GREERT; and Tim Nabut, the Hardwick Rescue Squad liaison.

"The immediate goal of the Emergency Team," according to the Greensboro town website is "to support a broad effort to minimize movement and community." "Stay at home," is the message the team is spreading. It applies to everyone, but especially to those who have traveled recently, and to those who have come to the area from coronavirus hot spots to the south.

In an interview Friday, Romans said that as a public policy, the town is in no way adversarial to people coming to the hospital. "But, we are trying to definitely get a message out there," Romans said. "To please respect the governor's 14-day quarantine order."

GREERT has primarily been working on education for residents and organizing potential resources. A database of volunteers has been created. A link posted on the town's website can help with a variety of needs, including delivering supplies. A person can also request support to they can stay home. So far, Fairbank says, there has not been significant demand, though the team has delivered food.

Another aspect of the response is a phone number 802-441-0220, which has been instituted by GREERT. This number, according to Nabut, will be answered by "real people" who will be able to



photo by Polly S. Allen, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art

(Above) photo of the painting Washington Crossing the Delaware by Emanuel Leutze.

photo by Polly S. Allen, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art

(Left) social distancing inspired art on the Craftsbury Community, where Hollis and the Hardwick Washington's perilous journey across the Delaware River, toilet paper in hand.

Community Supper Morphs into Soup and Bread

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY — The United Church of Craftsbury began free, once-a-month community supper a decade ago when Rev. Alan Parker, now deceased, was the church pastor. The tradition continued with Pastor Kim Larose and has now morphed into Monday night soup and bread take-out for the community.

Larose said, "The soup supper started as an outgrowth of our monthly community suppers. Craftsbury is an amazing community, offering support in some tremendous ways."

Originally, the Church Deacons' crisis fund covered the cost of purchases for the Monday night soup and bread. The East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church received a grant to help cover food needs in the community and is now assisting. Sterling College has also donated \$1,000 in food supplies that it had on hand from the early campus closing.

Kris Coville of the Neighbors-to-Neighbors task force, also received a grant to help with expenses for obtaining safety materials such as gloves, masks, and sanitizers.

The task force changed the soup meal to Monday night, not to take away from Wednesday night meals offered by Craftsbury General Store and Friday

night meals from the C Village store, Larose explained.

In March, the Wednesday night meal was originally being done by Allison VanAckeren, Larose said, but then the epidemic struck VanAckeren decided to keep the meal for that week by making soup and bread, having it as pick-up or delivery.

"It was such a success that Neighbors-to-Neighbors task force for the Craftsbury community decided to continue the offering. Barbara Strong made the next soup meal for the following week, then the General Store," Larose said.

Both Strong and VanAckeren have made soup and bread again for Monday night's offering.

In March, the Wednesday night meal was originally being done by Allison VanAckeren, Larose said, but then the epidemic struck VanAckeren decided to keep the meal for that week by making soup and bread, having it as pick-up or delivery.

"It was such a success that Neighbors-to-Neighbors task force for the Craftsbury community decided to continue the offering. Barbara Strong made the next soup meal for the following week, then the General Store," Larose said.

Both Strong and VanAckeren have made soup and bread again for Monday night's offering.



The Hardwick select board met on Zoom for its April 2 meeting. Top row (left to right): Hardwick Gazette contributor Doug McClure, Town Manager Sharon Fielder, Board member Shari Cornish and Vice Chair Elizabeth Dow. Middle row: Hardwick TV, Business Manager Casey Rowell, Roads Foreman/Fire Chief from Fiddon on the phone and Town Clerk/Treasurer on the phone. Bottom row: Eric Remick, board members Lucien Avery and Colleen Calaway. Kaine and Police Chief Aaron Cochran on the phone.

Select Board Zooms into Uncertain Future

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At its April 2 meeting, the Hardwick Select Board Zoomed to teleconference. Police Chief Aaron Cochran corrected misperceptions about the department's status and updated the board with where public safety stands in stark reality. While work on nonessential projects such as the Lamoine Center is halted, some projects are already funded and should proceed as the department is receiving updates at least daily. With most officers trained in house now for proper procedures, he said, "As of right now we're in pretty good shape." He took time to say, "I think it's important to talk about essential employees. It does mean that some of our families as many of us have children. I'd like to take a minute to recognize the staff of the officers working for us. It's a difficult struggle and not one that any of us are used to. He did not want people to misinterpret the department's preparation for calming news. The state has ordered refrigerated trucks to use as temporary morgues in case funeral homes overflow, he explained, and the medical examiners have ordered pickup trucks to serve as hearse.

More concerning, he said, "We're still seeing a large amount of traffic, which says to me [the stay-at-home order isn't] taken seriously. Traffic is at what it would normally be during rush hour," Cochran added that their arrival at a scene in case of a risk of exposure exists.

The economics of the shutdown are starting to become pressing for many businesses and citizens. For those businesses that Hardwick gave loans to through its economic development fund, the board opted to pump the brakes on payments, if needed. The overriding principle of the fund is promoting viable business in Hardwick and the board is cognizant some of those businesses have taken hits through no fault of their own due to COVID-19. Affected businesses can contact the town for suspension of payments for three months without interest accruing. Board member Elizabeth Dow said, essentially, this was a "vacation" where "the phone goes out for three months." The suspension applies to the businesses that have received loan funding, regardless of their current status.

More complicated is property taxes and water/sewer. Property taxes are due by May 10. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns has issued guidance stating that the only way to handle late payment is through the Board of Civil Authority. That board comprises the select board, Town Clerk/Treasurer, and the justice of the peace. The process is dictated by statute, so even though Hardwick has a "rainy day" fund, that process has to be followed. Dow asked, "When is it going to rain any harder on the town than this is now?"

Without legal leeway the town may well see a flood of abatement requests. Board member Shari Cornish advised residents to come forward before the fact if they believe tax payment might be late. Separately and later, Rep. Chip Troiano (D-Caledonia-2) of Stannard told residents legislation is in process and to contact him at chiptroiano@gmail.com.

The town's water and sewer is entirely self-funded, which poses a problem, said chair Eric Bonick. Town Manager Sharon Fielder clarified, "We're not coming at this saying we want to cut people's water. We're looking at customers; we want to help the residents. I'm just anxious about where the revenue stream is going to be for anything." He added the general advice for residents: "Do your best."