

# THE Hardwick Gazette

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## Large Turnout as Marion Babbie Turns 100



photo by Vanessa Fournier  
Marion Babbie turned 100 years old on May 6. A surprise birthday celebration was given in her honor. She has resided at the Lauredon Village Apartments in Greensboro for 18 years.

by Emmett Avery

GREENSBORO -- Marion Babbie was born May 6, 1920, in Westford. Last Wednesday, sirens blared and a great honking erupted as a parade of cars, led by Greensboro Fire Engine Number One, drove past Babbie's apartment on Breezy Avenue. It was May 6, 2020, and with the top 30 songs from 1938 blaring from the old firehouse nearby, Babbie celebrated her

one-hundredth year. Over thirty cars passed before a Hardwick Police Department cruiser brought up the end of the parade. Babbie sat on the steps of her apartment, waving to all the passers-by.

People began congregating in front of the Lauredon Village Apartments, in a somewhat socially-distanced fashion, to wish Babbie well. It was by far the largest crowd seen for months in the area—over 50 at its peak.

Babbie is spry for 100 years old and wanted that fact to be known. The television station WCAX was covering the event, and as their reporter set up his gear to film the parade, Babbie was heard to say from her post on the porch, "I want to go down there and show that with the camera that I can walk!" And soon enough, she did. Now sitting in a chair on the lawn, wearing a crown of orchids, she waved and talked to the people gathered to celebrate. "I guess these are all friends, but I don't know who they are," she said, referencing the universal face masks.

The motorcade was a surprise. Babbie said that she thought the day was just going to be like any other day. However, she said she heard in the morning that there would be a parade, but she was surprised by the mode of the celebrations when they eventually transpired. "I thought well, parade, people marching, I never thought about there being cars. A fire truck? I can't believe that. Channel Three? I can't believe that all of this is happening. I'm not anybody famous, I'm just a small, simple person," she said.

Babbie provided some insight into the psyche of the gathered crowd. "I think they decided this as much as I did ... it's given them something to think about, it gave them something to plan on."

Babbie, an 18-year resident of Greensboro, has lived in many locations during the country over her long life, but she says that Vermont has always been home. And with her community gathered around, she said she has no plans for leaving any time soon.



provided by AT&T to the Town of Hardwick  
AT&T provided the town of Hardwick with a photo simulation of its proposed tower's visual impact. At seventeen locations in and around Hardwick, AT&T created the simulation and photographed it with and without a balloon as a proxy for the tower. At about half of the locations the balloon could not be seen. Here are three locations where it was most visible. The left photo is without the balloon, and the photo on the right is with the balloon representing the tower. Top to bottom, Mackville Road, Route 14 South, and Marshall Street.

## AT&T Floats Trial Balloon

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK -- At the regularly scheduled May 7 Hardwick Select Board meeting, Town Manager Shaun Fielder said AT&T's design for the proposed tower on Buffalo Mountain still has not met Hardwick Electric Department's (HED) construction standards. To give residents an idea of what visual impact the tower would have, AT&T created a simulation using a balloon as a proxy for the tower and photographed the site from several locations in Hardwick, with and without the balloon standing in for the proposed tower.

The Hardwick Select Board once more addressed the subject of property tax payments and water/sewer bills. Those bills are coming due while some residents are struggling financially due to the pandemic's economic impact.

The state legislature is working on a bill that would allow towns to defer residents' property tax obligations, and Town Manager Shaun Fielder said he had offered testimony on the bill. Fielder said "even if this [deferral] were able to take place, the town is still obligated to pay its education tax bills." If Hardwick can't make that \$2.3m education tax bill payment, the town would be hit with penalties.

Fielder said that the obligation meant Hardwick should be "holding the line" on property tax payments. He said that if the town garnered enough to cover the education tax bill, the town would have more flexibility in working with property owners. "I wouldn't want folks to think we're not aware of some people having hardships," he said. Water and sewer bills are also due May 15.

Town Clerk Alberta Miller said, "We need to get paid as much as we possibly can [be] because we have to keep running the system." Both Fielder and Miller said it was unknown what impact late

payments or non-payments might have. Fielder said that if the town comes up short, it may be necessary to go into the town's reserves or "go to the market" to offset those losses.

The board heard from Hardwick Electric Department about its participation in an upcoming automation project. The board appointed Paul Fick as an alternative representative to the Communications Union District, now known as NEK Community Broadband (NEKCB). In other internet news, select board member Celidh Gallagher-Kane said the Neighbor-to-Nighbor group now has "opened up Wi-Fi at Atkins Field."

Police Chief Aaron Cochran said that the month of April had 139 incidents, compared to 204 in April 2019.

Chief Cochran said the only part-time officer remaining on the force is moving to another state and has resigned, and the department is looking at another applicant who is part-time certified for the position. As state restrictions relax, the police academy has re-opened, said Cochran, and the department was able to get an officer in for training at the end of May. He said the loosened state restrictions may be good for people suffering from "extended cabin fever."

Hardwick Electric Department's Mike Sullivan gave a periodic report to the select board. Sullivan wanted HED customers to be aware that HED is still working, even though in-person interaction with customers is suspended. HED put a hold on disconnections even before the state mandated that, he said. The utility is not seeing an unmanageable revenue decrease yet "but we're only one-and-a-half cycles in." Over the next two to four weeks, Sullivan said, HED will be working on upgrades to the Hardwick Village circuit which will require "six quick outages between now and

the end of June." Those upgrades will reduce losses on the circuit dramatically. He said before outages start customers will likely get a knock on their door, and those outages "are going to be like 10 minutes."

The Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) is working on an automated Advanced Metering Infrastructure structure solution (AMI) and, as a member, HED is participating. The project's costs are being divided among its members, said Sullivan. HED's share of the expenses "is about 10%" and some other costs are being paid by VPPSA.

The improvements will bring more automation, such as "remote customer connects and disconnects" and meter reading, as well as better load forecasting. Instead of guessing how much power to buy from the market, the utility will be able to get "much more accurate" in its purchases, which also is something the utility's regulators are pushing for.

In Yellow Barn news, Fielder said the first meetings with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) had begun with an agenda kick-off. The Lamson Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) projects are starting to pick up despite the pandemic, and Fielder said the town was working on sending out bids in early-to-mid June.

The town is also seeking Northern Border Regional Commission funding for improvements to the wastewater facility. "It's going to be a pretty competitive round, we know this," said Fielder. Overall, with pandemic-related restrictions loosening "We're starting to get ourselves back to our summer projects," he said, with the caveat that no one knows the total impact of the pandemic on state finances or what that might mean for projects such as the LVRT. Early projections estimate \$440m in losses, about 7% of the budget.

## Woodbury Principal Stepping Down at End of School Year

by Emmett Avery

WOODBURY -- On Monday, April 13, Woodbury elementary school principal Craig Wilson notified the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) leadership team of his intent to end his principalship at the end of this school year.

In his letter, Wilson speaks highly of working with the children of the Woodbury school, and with the administration, board members, Woodbury families, and staff. He says he loved some parts of the work, but that most of the job was a "daunting experience." As a reason for leaving, Wilson cites the time he took to him away from his children and wife.

He said that he believes in the vision and ideals that the OSSU and community partners have been working toward and that he will continue his efforts through the end of the year.

He did not give a specific indication of what he plans to do next.

Wilson's departure lit off a significant discussion at the May 6 meeting of the Orleans Southwest Union Elementary District board. The board debated how best



Craig Wilson  
photo by Vanessa Fournier

to proceed, focusing on two main options: either hiring a new principal to fill the vacancy, or combining the principalship of Woodbury and Lakeview into one.

OSSU superintendent Adam Rosenberg suggested that Justine Guthrie, current principal at Lakeview, be appointed as interim principal at Woodbury for the coming year, on top of her current responsibilities.

Various board members expressed concern over the possibly excessive workload for one person to administer both schools.

Wilson said that, given his experience in the position, he would suggest that if the board decides to hire someone to fill the position as it now stands, that person should have prior leadership experience. Wilson, who described himself as being "green to administration" when he started at Woodbury, said that, "in hindsight," he was, "not prepared for some parts of the job."

Board chair Katharine Ingram said that discussion about the Woodbury principalship has always been difficult. The "Woodbury community comes out very strongly in favor of having an administrator," she said, but fiscally, "it does not make as much sense."

The board decided to have a meeting with Lakeview and Woodbury staff to gather information on how they feel about unifying the principal position for the two schools, while at the same time the administration will start a parallel effort to search for potential candidates to fill the position if the board elects to hire someone new.

The board will most likely decide on the matter at its May 27 meeting.