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Roundabout, parking project, theme park work to begin

by Paul Fixx

HARDWICK – A last-minute meeting of area select boards Monday evening drew a crowd as they took the advice of March town meeting attendees to prioritize economic development efforts in area towns.

The idea, spearheaded by Hardwick's Town Manager and Select Board Chair, was inspired by the massive construction project that has taken over Hardwick's downtown. They said, "in for a penny, in for a pound," seeing it as the perfect opportunity to address unsafe traffic issues at the South

Main Street intersection with Wolcott Street.

Hardwick's Police Chief said he had no interest in seeing the intersection return to having one blinking light when construction is complete.

Thus it's the perfect opportunity to replace the intersection with the long-discussed roundabout, said the town manager. "Preliminary plans call for condemning the ruins of the former Flood Zone and Hardwick Boxing Club property, and the home between it and the intersection."

See **ROUNDAABOUT**, next page



Recently developed plans to convert Hardwick's municipal designation into a for-profit Disney-style theme park are well underway, with this initial artist's rendering being circulated for public comment.

artist's rendering



The face of Hardwick's Buffalo Mountain now shows the new mega-slide, opening April 1, with tram rides to the top from Wright Farm Road's intersection with Vt. Rt. 15. Revenue from the attraction will more than cover the cost of maintaining the property and generate at least as much additional income as the rejected local option tax was projected to raise.

photo by April F. Ool.

Buffalo Mountain mega-slide first town forest addition

by Paul Fixx

HARDWICK – The installation of a "mega-slide" at the peak of Buffalo Mountain will be complete on April 1, much to the delight of many tired hikers who just can't bring themselves to make the trek to the bottom.

The slide is the first addition to the Hardwick Town Forest approved by voters during the March town meeting. A recent petition submitted to the Hardwick Town Clerk requests a revote of that article.

See **MEGA-SLIDE**, next page

Smarties®, Cabot Creamery debut cheese in candy collaboration

UNION, N.J., – Smarties Candy Company and Cabot Creamery today unveiled an innovation in snack engineering: Seriously Smart Cheese, the world's first cheddar-forward candy tablet. The collaboration reimagines Cabot's award-winning Seriously Sharp Cheddar through the lens of Smarties. To create Seriously Smart Cheese, Cabot's cheddar is carefully pulverized into a fine powder before being re-formed into signature Smarties-style discs.

"At Cabot, we've always believed cheese should be everywhere, including the candy aisle," said The Big Cheese at Cabot Creamery. "We set out to make cheddar more portable. We may have overachieved." "We were inspired by astronauts. And off-grid cheesemongers," said Smarties' Head of Product Dryness.

The imagined product features a sensory profile: texture, dry, genuinely genius; flavor, hints of cheese, smartly balanced; scent,

ambitious; shelf life?

We asked "what would happen if cheddar got a little smarter," said the Seriously Smart Cheese Lead Formulation Scientist. "This is what graduated." Seriously Smart Cheese represents a frontier in snack innovation, joining two brands to challenge assumptions about cheese and candy.

This announcement is part of an April Fool's Day campaign. Seriously Smart Cheese is not a real product.



Cheddar-flavored candy tablets debut April 1, in a collaboration between Smarties any Company and Cabot Creamery.

courtesy photo

Bezos buys Gazette, begins news buying spree

by Con Alters

HARDWICK – Jeff Bezos, wealthy founder of Amazon.com and owner of The Washington Post, today announced his purchase of The Hardwick Gazette and the launch of a new "local-Ish" journalism initiative, effective April 1.

Bezos described The Gazette as "a hick-town newspaper nobody's ever heard of" which would offer him "a break from all the picky criticism I get over The Washington Post."

The Gazette will be the first of hundreds of small-newspaper buyouts, which were

"attractive" targets to Bezos because they are "so cheap and obscure," he said.

Bezos plans to build a national network of small papers that will "help defray some of my losses at The Post and achieve economies of scale beyond anything realized by the most aggressive of private equity funds."

Bezos then added, "Also, of course, expand my well-known commitment to journalism," after an aide approached him and whispered something in his ear.

Gazette readers will "hardly notice" any

See **BEZOS**, third page



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PUBLIC SERVICES



A sasquatch spotted near Center Road in Hardwick, March 27, is suspected of making off with heifers from the nearby Laggis Farm. An area sasquatch (right) ran from police during an encounter in the summer of 2021, but gave up and was released with no charges filed after no offense could be identified.

photo by Paul Fixx

Sasquatch roams freely, heifers missing

by Hardwick
Peace Department

HARDWICK – Officers of the Hardwick Peace Department (HPD) have recently been searching the area between Hardwick Center and East Hardwick following reports and a photo of a sasquatch roaming freely. The Laggis Farm has reported missing heifers over the last several months, thought to be stolen, but computerized records at the farm have failed to list the missing animals. Forensic agricultural

economists brought in from Cornell University have identified altered records in the farm's database. Huge footprints leading to the office where records are kept now suggest the offending sasquatch may be far more intelligent than previously suspected.

This is the first time HPD has been called about the area's bigfoot since an earlier encounter in the summer of 2021 during which the sasquatch gave up after a lengthy chase, but was released after no offense could be identified.

GMTCC Trojan horsecapades foiled

by Raymonda Parchment

HYDE PARK – The full-scale trojan horse built by Green Mountain Technical Center students has proven to be more than just a model.

The students, who shall remain unnamed due to being minors with pending criminal charges, spent the last semester designing and constructing what was meant to be a scale model of the infamous trojan horse, commonly known from Greek mythological tales.

As it turns out, the group was accurate down to the very last nail, as the architects left enough room for at least ten of their classmates, or a small force, to hunker down inside.

The teens got as far as Barton, near exit 25 on the interstate, leading investigators to speculate they were attempting entry into Canada.

Secured to a flatbed trailer, three students in the cab of a medium-sized pickup truck are said to have been involved in an attempt to transport their classmates, secluded inside, across the Northeast Kingdom region.

Onlookers recall seeing the wooden horse, with a hidden surprise unbeknownst to them, during their morning commute earlier that day last week before Vermont State Police dispatch reports having received the first alarming phone call.

In an effort to ensure their hidden companions could breathe, several portholes were cut into the facade of the horse, with the two largest being the eye-holes, as well as some positioned underneath the halter.

Dispatch first received a 911 call from a worried commuter, who said they saw arms somehow waving out of a wooden sculpture. The second call was similar, with a concerned bus driver alerting the police to a potential kidnapping, the method being odd but equally as concerning.

A court hearing is scheduled for April 1, in Newport, though VSP reports the specific charges are yet to be determined as there was no smuggling, no kidnapping, no injuries and Vermont law does not prohibit transporting passengers in the bed of a pickup truck, despite the obvious danger.

Mega-slide

Continued From Page One

question will be taken up by the select board at its April 2 meeting.

"We may have gotten a bit ahead of ourselves on this one," said the town's new Select Board Chair Daisy Flame.

To use the slide, residents will be required to sign a liability waiver, as descent speeds of 50 to 60 miles-per-hour have been recorded during test runs.

The slide comes in the wake of several helicopter dispatches to the peak of Buffalo Mountain, of which the select board says the town simply cannot afford any more for the rest of the fiscal year.

The hikers claimed heatstroke, heart attack, panic attacks and more to justify their air-lift transportation, all being later diagnosed with general fatigue by EMS and hospital officials later on.

The Hardwick Conservation Commission plans a contest to name the new attraction, noted an item on the town website.

A select board member, who preferred to be anonymous, said "I mean I get it, the best part of the hike is the way up. No one really cares about the descent. You've seen it all already. But we just can't airlift anyone else, it's an

economic responsibility thing."

A woolen mat will be provided for those who choose to descend from Buffalo Mountain via slide, as well as wind goggles. Both can be deposited at the bottom, to be sanitized and later trammed back up to the top. The tram station located at Wright Farm Road will complete construction shortly before the slide's opening, to the chagrin of many Lamoille Valley Rail Trail users, who will have to walk around the site.

Recently residents have noted the feature snaking through the woods on the face of the mountain above Hardwick and have suggested the tram might transport riders to the top for a small additional fee. Both Flame and interim Town Manager Dopie Ruxpin said no one had suggested that and they will pass the suggestion along to the yet to be formed Buffalo Mountain Stewardship Committee.

A blow up inflatable will be placed at the bottom, before the landing pond is constructed. The pond will cycle into the Lamoille River, all natural, in lieu of constructing a pool in the area.

The slide feature is the first of many rides and attractions planned for the re-envisioned town of Hardwick, said Ruxpin.

Roundabout

Continued From Farout Gazwte

"With those properties available, a two-story parking garage will be constructed over the Lamoille River with the roundabout above it. An entrance to the garage will connect to the town lot at the Daniel's Block," he said. "It should put an end to Hardwick's perennial parking problem.

The real inspiration came with the next phase of the project, which involves the real estate over the roundabout, where plans are now being drawn up for a 14-story luxury hotel to replace the Inn by the River, lost to 2023 summer flooding, said Hardwick's Select Board Chair.

Attracting visitors to the hotel will be the goal of Hardwick's plan to drop its municipal designation in favor of a Disney-style incorporated theme-park, which the town's Community Development Coordinator is expected to submit the application for April 1, she said.

The Buffalo Mountain Mega-Slide will be the first attraction to open on April 1 (see sidebar).

Other attractions being considered include a bungee launch, which is expected to be especially useful to cross from one end of Wolcott Street to the other during regular flooding. It will save a lot of money if we don't have to figure

out how to keep that area from flooding in the future, said the select board chair.

Neighboring towns were receptive to the project, with Woodbury working to capitalize on its reputation as the "Land of Lakes and Ponds." Plans are now in development to connect a seven-mile ring of waterbodies, creating a lazy river ride.

In Walden, officials are working with VTrans to install a toll-booth on Vt. Rte. 15 and create a Wall Drug-style tourist emporium with a 1,000-seat restaurant to attract drivers entering and leaving Hardwick via the closest interstate highway in St. Johnsbury.

In Craftsbury, the Blackbird Bistro and Farmhouse has applied for a permit to expand, with the addition of 350 luxury guest rooms.

Headwaters Community Trust board members were enthusiastic that the Hardwick theme park will generate plenty of visitors to occupy empty dorm rooms on the Sterling College campus after the departure of students this spring.

Hardwick officials are now working with neighboring towns to develop a traffic plan that will accommodate the construction which will not allow any traffic through from August 2026 through April 2028, if all goes well.

Sterling pivots to ancient agriculture, education

by Paul Fixx

CRAFTSBURY – The Sterling College Board announced plans last week to pivot to a non-degree curriculum officials managing the campus have been enticed by since its inception in 1887. The plan has the campus dropping all motorized and electrified conveniences, plus all its internet connections, returning to ancient agricultural and educational practices.

President Scott Thomas said, “We’ve worked hard for well over a century to revitalize lost and declining agricultural and educational arts, but never had the nerve to make the hard decision this board has just taken.”

The new curriculum will study weather using Vermont

weather sticks and reading the stripes on wooly bear caterpillars, for example.

The study of beavers for flood mitigation and construction is expected to be particularly in-demand as global warming increases atmospheric energy, resulting in more rainfall, with hurricanes reaching further inland.

All of the campus trucks and tractors will be sold and the funds reinvested in a herd of wooly mammoths recently developed from ancient DNA fragments.

A community meeting is scheduled for April 1, at 1 p.m., in Simpson Hall to hear details of the plan. Attendees will be asked to contribute a line to the new campus song, which begins “Old McCarthy had a barn, AI-AI-No.”

Bezos

Continued From Page One

changes in its content, Bezos promised, although his staff later said all current staff will be replaced by a junior editor at The Post and a Southeast Asian content farm.

The Gazette’s new editor, Stan Lickspittle, will oversee dozens of papers across the Northeast. Although he won’t be anywhere near Vermont, he expressed “my total commitment to serving the good people of Hardstick, Greensville, Crafton, Woodbuzzy, Marshfiddle, and, of course, et cetera.”

As a token of appreciation for

their loyal readership, Bezos said, Gazette subscribers will be offered discount coupons for the Amazon subsidiary Whole Foods Market, good for in-store purchases only. When it was pointed out that the closest Whole Foods location was more than two hours away in Manchester, N.H., Bezos said, “Sounds like a great little road trip to me.”

Former staff of the Hardwick Gazette could not be reached for comment, but neighbors noticed several UPS delivery trucks unloading at the editor’s residence last week. A great number of empty boxes with the Amazon smile logo have been piled in his dooryard since then.

Woodsmoke by Julie Atwood



“TODAY’S WEATHER CALLS FOR 100 % CHANCE OF TRAMPOLINES AND COWS!”



The front of a proposed commemorative gold coin features the likeness of President Trump. courtesy Commission of Fine Arts

Erection of Presidential statue planned, April 1

by Invisible Hardwick

MONTPELIER — Invisible Hardwick has been selected to provide the keynote speech on the Vermont Statehouse lawn for the un-cloaking of the first of 50 Donald Trump statues to be erected in state capitals throughout the U.S. The event is scheduled Wednesday, April 1, half past 1 to forevermore.

The events are planned in conjunction with the release of a commemorative Presidential gold coin and the President’s signature on all paper money beginning this year; the 250th anniversary of the country’s birth.

The U.S. Treasury Department

announced this month that President Donald Trump’s signature will appear on all new U.S. paper currency, marking the first time a sitting president’s signature is featured, noted CNN. The move breaks a 165-year tradition of only featuring the Treasury Secretary and Treasurer signatures.

Invisible’s local coordinators Wholelotta Crazed and Satchel Troll would not comment on the draft of their speech, assuring the Governor that Vermont residents would not be disappointed. “We promise your attention will not sag,” they said. “We can’t promise as much for our plans to decorate the statue.”

Heller’s World by Joe Heller



“I’M GOING TO PASS ON APRIL FOOLING YOU THIS YEAR SINCE YOU SAID THAT EVERY DAY SEEMS LIKE IT’S BEEN SOME KIND OF CRUEL JOKE!”

September Stannard Stampede scheduled

by Stannard Economic Development Committee

STANNARD – The Stannard Economic Development Committee (SEDC), formed at town meeting in March, has launched its first initiative, the Stannard Stampede.

The effort is designed not only to bring tourist revenue to the town, but also reduce the cost of maintaining the Stannard Community Church lawn and protect the historic building from damage.

The stampede, scheduled daily for seven days, from Saturday, Sept. 19, to Saturday, Sept. 26, with Sunday off, coinciding with foliage season, will begin each day with bulls released on Stannard Mountain Road at its intersection with Hutchins Farm Road. Numbered bulls, by then well-grown, will head east on Stannard Mountain Road, finishing at its intersection with Sherburne Road and Wolf Den Road.

Along the way, visitors lining the road and wielding banderillas, the colorful, barbed darts used in Spanish bullfighting, and red capes, will direct their chosen bull in the correct direction.

For an entry fee of \$25, each contestant



Beginning in mid-April the Stannard Church lawn will become the pasture for a dozen yearling bulls being raised for the Stannard Stampede, September 19 to 26. AI rendering

will receive a quiver of five banderillas and a red cape when they choose their bull. Those picking the winning bill will split half the proceeds from that day. The remainder will cover

the cost of keeping the bulls and upkeep of the church.

SEDC members expect 2,000 to 2,500 contestants daily and a total of roughly one million spectators over the course of the eight day event, similar to the crowds at Pamplona, Spain's annual Running of the Bulls in July. Prizes totaling \$175,000 will be awarded. Additionally, up to 10 food trucks will pay \$250 daily for a spot in the town lot next to the church.

A dozen yearling bulls have been ordered for delivery in mid-April to be kept on the lawn around the church where SEDC volunteers expect to begin building a fence to contain the animals April 1.

The grazing animals will keep the lawn low and their excrement will provide a deterrent to vandals while pastured across from the town hall.

While a yearling bull can cost \$5,000, and the annual cost of feed and veterinary bills can reach \$1,000 per animal, amounting to just \$60,000 for the dozen bulls in the first year, income of at least \$150,000 will earn \$90,000 for the town coffers after the purchase and care of the bulls.

Pickle brine concerns discussed by select board

by April F. Ools

GREENSBORO – A request from a local pickleball club to use the Greensboro Town Hall's third floor caused some consternation among members of the Greensboro Select Board at a recent meeting.

The building's third floor gym has been unused for years due to building code violations. While the board would like to see the space used, this particular proposal raised some vexing questions.

Select Board Chair MacNeil said that, while he wants to support the club, he had some concerns about leaking brine from the pickle jar damaging town infrastructure. "It's the board's responsibility to see that the town hall is used in a responsible manner", he said.

Town FEMA Coordinator Josh Karp, who works on the floor just below the gym, wondered if brine might drip on his desk. "I'm concerned that time-sensitive FEMA paperwork could be damaged, which would delay reimbursement payments to the town. I'm not sure this proposal is worth the risk." Janice Dinsdale and Miriam Rogers, long-time volunteers at the Giving Closet, expressed similar concern that dripping pickle juice could soil the racks of used clothing they've carefully sorted and arranged for re-use.

Pickleball enthusiast Rob Brigham assured the board there would be no problems. "At the beginning of play, the pickles are removed from the brine, thoroughly dried off, and the crock's lid is securely tightened. We can guarantee there will be no brine leakage."

Select board member Judy Carpenter noted how the gym is dusty and grimy after years of unuse. Instead of thinking of the brine as a liability, she suggested it could be used as an effective cleaning solution for the gym floor and walls.

Town treasurer Brett Stanciu expressed

her fondness for pickles, and inquired as to whether there might be enough pickles for her lunch. Brigham said while the group could spare some pickles, he requested that Stanciu keep her consumption moderate.

Karl Stein, who's been the liaison with the state fire marshal regarding code issues on the third floor, offered to check with the marshal about new code-compliance issues the pickles could trigger.

Gazette Editor Paul Fixx observed that the pickleball club, as an official town committee, has not properly warned its meetings and that minutes from the group are routinely posted late. "They're supposed to be posted to the town website within five calendar days. This simply hasn't happened and is a clear violation of the open meeting law."

Ellen Celnik shared an anecdote about a time she encountered a similar situation in New York City, where she worked for many years. "State statues typically allow gherkin-adjacent committees more time to post minutes than other groups, for obvious reasons."

Select board legal liaison, Tim Brennan, requested permission to have a conversation with the town attorney about the legal risk to the town of pickles being tossed around the third-floor space. Plus, he added, "it's a historical building and we have to consider potential damage to historically-significant building features. For instance, the high salt content of brine could cause the antique stamped metal wall finish to rust".

Town clerk, Kim Greaves, said she checked with the town's insurer and found that any damage to the building from "pickle juice and related brines" can be claimed, thanks to an insurance rider covering "sporting activities named after common foods".

Select board member Mike Metcalf, who was involved with a renovation of the town hall building in the late 1980s, recalled that he secured grant funding to coat all surfaces



Pickleball players in the Greensboro Town Hall last weekend, after been given approval at a recent selectboard meeting to play in the upstairs gym. courtesy rendering

on the third floor with a brine-resistant finish. At that time the pickleball craze was just getting underway in Brooklyn. "Being a student of history, it's clear that there's a lag of about three decades for the latest societal trends to make their way up to rural Vermont. I felt it was prudent to plan ahead", explained Metcalf.

After digesting this historical tidbit and congratulating Metcalf on his foresight, the board agreed that the pickleball club's proposed use of the third floor posed little risk, and unanimously approved their request.

Naked yoga moves to town beach, April 1

GREENSBORO — Yoga classes previously scheduled at the Greensboro United Church of Christ, Tuesday and Thursday at 1 p.m., will move to the Greensboro Town Beach beginning April 1 due to a scheduling conflict.

Clothing continues to be optional, though the Town Hall Giving Closet will be open those days from noon to 2 p.m. for those who arrive unprepared to exercise outdoors.