

Town May Need to Buy Yellow Barn

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At the Thursday, August 16 meeting, Hardwick Town Manager Jim Jewett said it was probably in the town's best interest to sign a purchase option agreement for the Yellow Barn project, the town got some help on the storm water front and the search for a new town manager began.

Jewett said he had received unambiguous indications that the grant money under Hardwick Town the Yellow Barn.

"We've seen the writing on the wall that the Vermont Community Development Program and Economic Development Administration folks all want to have the town own the property," he said. "They don't really want the town

to just take the grant and pass it on. They've told us if we don't own the property, they're going to make this [the grant] a loan and not a grant."

Select Board Chair Eric Remick expressed concern about the town owning the property in a "traditional sense," which would require upkeep. Jewett said a dormant non-profit is available through the Northern Counties Investment Corporation, and that non-profit could be activated and used to handle operations.

The Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) 2017 grant could be used as part of the purchase, with a two-way match, which Remick said could come from a loan from the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVEDA). New Market Tax Credit

its could pay back the loan. Jewett expressed concern over the timeliness of a loan.

"The problem with a loan is unless you're going to take a loan out for a year, it has to go to a town-wide vote. To drag out this thing as far, probably the people who would like to be our anchor tenants won't be around by the time we move forward with this."

Remick said the NVEDA or another partner might could assume the loan.

Jewett reported the St. Johnsbury natural resource district offered its assistance on storm water projects, including improving a culvert by Dana's Car Store and a check valve on the Cottage Street Bridge, which would ease water flowing backwards and

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photo by Vanessa Fournier

Hardwick Rescue Squad members attending their annual picnic Aug. 8 pose in front of the organization's new 2017 ambulance, which was officially put on wheels that day. Hardwick Rescue began operations in 1987 and is now in its 51st year of serving Hardwick and surrounding towns. Pictured, from top row left to right: Matt Corbin, Caleb Smith, Jason Corbin, Ryan Bellini, Eric Crossway, Andrew Casavant, Jim Robert, Mike Rowe, Alex Gagnier, Greg Conant, Andrew Corbin, Kevin Hines, Kim Starr, Michael Newman, Derek Williams, Tom Nixson, BJ Hodgdon. Back row: Tom Fritz, Patty Meyer, Derrick Trott, Mary Hall, Lindsay Wilson, Margaret Logan, Steve Forman, Sarah Hines, Lisa Lathrop, Rob Kowalski, Tom Hill, Dawn Hill, Rick Sullivan.

Abutment Crack Shuts Wolcott's 1928 Bridge

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT — A substantial crack was discovered under the 1928 bridge connecting Wolcott's School Street to Highway 15 by fishermen on August 15. The fissure is where the steel truss connects to the concrete abutment on the School Street side. The state was notified, arrip to inspect the crack and close off the bridge. The 105-foot-long bridge carries an estimated 450 vehicles each day.

The select board is meeting this Wednesday, August 22, to discuss options and come up with a solution. The bridge was reconstructed in 2004 after receiving a Post-rating from the National Bridge Inventory. Now, in most recent reports, it is designated Fair with a 2017 assessment that requires repair.

The most recent inspection by the Vermont Agency of Transportation was conducted in August of 2017, and the following notation was made: "Superstructure needs repairs where holes have formed along lower webs of vertical and diagonals that were not plated during repair. Plating along end of structure along legs needs repair. Stringer 3 abutment 1 has

small hole along web and should be plated. Failed backwall along abutment 1 has been like this for years now and sink hole developed along abutment 1 upstream and was filled with soil/potholes. Abutment 1 failed backwall will need replacement. Town's desire to try was "intolerable, corrective action needed" and structurally rated "better than minimum acceptable."

The next inspection was not planned until 2019. The 2015

inspection of the bridge also concluded repairs were needed and estimated to cost \$80,000 in repairs, which, adjusted for inflation, would be \$80,000 in 2018 dollars. The 2017 assessment also noted that the bridge's deck geometry was "intolerable, corrective action needed" and structurally rated "better than minimum acceptable."

Visible rust holes are apparent in the truss structure.

Woodbury Board Removes Zoning Administrator

by Doug McClure

WOODBURY — Last Wednesday Woodbury Select Board officially signed off on a document formalizing the removal of former Zoning Administrator Jennifer Harman.

To remove a person from town office, according to board member Brian Shattner, unopposed. His involvement with the select board goes back almost two decades and he cannot recall a similar situation. Board chair Skip Lindsay called the entire sequence of events leading up to today as "sad" and said it could

have been resolved so many better ways with Harman's cooperation. "As of today [August 15], Jennifer Harman is not zoning administrator. She is not an officer of the town, she does not represent the town. She is," said Lindsay, pausing for a moment, "she is Jennifer Harman."

As per Vermont law, this meeting was warned. In the board's view, everything that could have been said was said at the earlier three-hour-long hearing, which ultimately wound up with Harman concluding that a conspiracy today as "sad" and said it could

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Cabot School Officials Appear Before State Board

by Will Walters

MONTEPELIER — The state Board of Education heard from Superintendent Mark Tucker and Cabot School board chair Chris Torrey on the school district's request to the recommendation of the Agency of Education to have Cabot merge with the Danville School District to comply with Act 46.

Danville had a separate hearing before the state board on August 16, along with Twifield Union School and Cabot. Danville stated it was opposed to merging with Cabot, as part because it did not want to be responsible for dealing with Cabot's high school, which is the position the Cabot board was putting forth. Danville School's position is that it wants to remain an independent district.

The Cabot board decided at its meeting on August 16 that it would present to the state board a position that it wants to remain an independent district with its high school. It decided, however, that it is not agreeable to the state board, which raised concerns that even having a Prop-

ect Based Learning program at Cabot, if not a full high school, would be at the discretion of Danville's representatives.

Superintendent Mark Tucker said Washington Northeast Supervisory Union will be dissolved on July 1, 2019, and both Twifield and Cabot will need to develop budgets for fiscal year 2020 based on being in either supervisory unions. He said that if Cabot remains independent, it is unclear if it will continue to

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photo by Vanessa Fournier

Sally Smith (left) of Hacking Holes Farm in Greensboro shows her miniature horse, Dorthy, 16, to Hekko Dimes (right) on farm August 15.

Area Residents Appointed to Governor's Task Force

by Will Walters

MONTEPELIER — Rory Thibault of Cabot, the state's attorney for Washington County, is one of 10 people appointed by Gov. Phil Scott to his recently-created Community Violence Prevention Task Force. Scott announced his

appointments on August 16. The group is comprised of individuals from state government and the private sector.

Thibault is a Cabot School Board member and village business leader as a partner in The Dean & Harry's Hardware in Cabot Village. David Baker of Danville, superintendent of Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union, is also one of the 19 appointed task force members.

"I am honored to be included on our governor's task force," said Thibault. "As a prosecutor and school board member I have particular interest in the work of the task force. Likewise, as a resident of a rural community, I am aware of the challenges of delivering services to small towns like mine. Woodbury and Marshfield. Ensuring the tools and systems for early intervention among a broad set of community stakeholders is critical to reducing the risk level of violence in our communities, large and small," said Thibault.

The task force is composed of educators, a Norwich University police officer, a representative of Vermont Medical Center physicians and licensed counsel-

ors, along with state officials. Scott created the Task Force as part of the state administration's broader efforts to ensure Vermont continues to be one of the safest states in the country.

"This Task Force will work together to reduce violence in our society," says Scott. "Our goal must be to find ways that we can make our schools and communities safer by addressing the underlying factors that lead to violence."

"Our work is to create opportunities for safer communities," said Dr. Daniel Barkhoff, Task Force co-chair and UVM Medical Center physician. "This will be difficult work, but critically important, and we appreciate being given this vital charge."

The task force will review and assess high-quality primary research, including Vermont data to the extent it is available, regarding the underlying causes of violence in our communities.

At the request of the House of

photo by Doug McClure

The School Street Bridge in Wolcott was closed by the state after fishermen discovered a sink crack. The ninety-year-old bridge also has serious rust holes in its structure.

Schools Get Grants to Keep Kids Safe

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELIER — The Governor's Office announced last week that 529 schools would receive grants totaling \$4 million to fund infrastructure upgrades for school safety. The program was funded in the Spring in the aftermath of the Portland shooting and near-miss at Fair Haven Union.

"Purchases will include interior and exterior door locks, indoor and outdoor public address systems and other infrastructure upgrades to improve safety. Schools were eligible for up to \$25,000 and will be responsible for a 25 percent grant match," the office said in a release.

Further funding of \$1 million will be available in the fall for developing energy plans, safety exercises, and training. See SAFE, 4

"Getting these projects started quickly will help students, staff and administrators focus on learning," said Governor Phil Scott in the statement. "Looking ahead, we will continue to do all we can to enhance the safety of our schools for our children, parents, faculty and the community, including leveraging \$1 million from the Homeland Security Grant Program to support planning and working with the Legislature to fund additional infrastructure improvements and procedures to do all the entire education system."

Earlier this year, schools were given a safety assessment by the state to assess what improvements were needed and where. "I think obviously we have to do that. We have evidence of the danger of violence," said Hallquist.

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