



photo by Vanessa Fournier  
Biller Wolcott dancers from left, Erica Leves, Sophia Kirtzberg, Arbian Gilvan and Elana Haininsky, performing during The Nutcracker held at The Highland Center for the Arts Dec. 7 and 8. See review on Page 6.

## Select Board Hires Fielder as New Hardwick Town Manager

by Doug McClure

**HARDWICK** — At the December 6 meeting, the Hardwick Select Board announced it had concluded its town manager search and hired Shaun Fielder of Woodbury for the job. The board also took a look at the last pieces of the \$3.8 million FY 2019-2020 budget under development for the town.

Select board chair Eric Remick announced that after an exhaustive search with many candidates, Shaun Fielder was "by far the best" of any of the other people applicants. Board member Elizabeth Dow concurred with brevity, saying "good hire."

Fielder is not unfamiliar with Hardwick, living just down the road in Woodbury, and also has known Jon Jewett for 25 years, he said. Jewett, for his part, made every effort to give his successor all the tools needed for the job in a gift bag: a blood pressure monitor, a Kindle and a bottle of hand sanitizer. He also had a bag of candy for Fielder, which Fielder shared with the board and audience.

"I wanted to say thank you to the select board. I'm really honored that I'm going to be in the position of manager. I'm humbled by this," Fielder said of the new job. "I do treat it as a high honor, myself and my family. In a gift bag he had been working behind the scenes with Remick and the board, and his experience thus far has been "really positive" which he took as "a good sign."

"I do look forward to working with the select board, and all the elected officials in town," said Fielder. "To work with the department heads and all the employees at all levels. In addition I look forward to working with the citizens of the community, the business owners and of course the visitors in my leadership role."

Fielder added, "I'd like to say to Jon, you're handing over the reins, and please know that I'm committed to carrying on the positive leadership role you've done for these past seven years and hopefully I can do you proud."

He starts work on January 15. Jewett said he has committed to what he can offer during the transition.

Business Manager Casey Rowell gave the board a look at a very early rough sketch of the FY 2019-2020 last day departmental budget: public library recreation and trails plus office staff payroll. Over the past few select board meetings, she has been reviewing department by department figures with the board to give an idea of what each department wants in terms of funding for the upcoming fiscal year.

The extremely preliminary budget figure is \$5,072,000 which is a 5.11 percent increase. Revenues increased by an estimated \$1,605 to \$1,067,270, leaving \$2,305,330 to be paid for by taxes. The goal directed by Jewett for the budget increase is to try to stay as close

See MANAGER, 5



photo by Vanessa Fournier  
Hardwick Select Board Chair Eric Remick (right) shakes hands and congratulates Shaun Fielder (left) of Woodbury as the newly appointed Hardwick Town Manager. In the background, board member Elizabeth Dow. Shaun will begin Jan. 15.

## Ownership of School District Assets Questioned

by June Pichel Cook

**CRAFTSBURY** — The impacts of ACT 46 and school district consolidations forming new districts has reduced municipalities across the state to take closer looks at their school district assets and preservation. In Holland, Seven Days reported that the town voted to close its elementary school before merging to keep the town's ownership of the school building. This conundrum has been raised in other Vermont towns.

At its meeting last week, the Select Board discussed hiring a lawyer to clarify ownership of town/school buildings. Ownership of Craftsbury Academy,

school woodlot and school buildings has been modified throughout their long history, but now the need for clarification is urgent. Under ACT 46 mergers, all school district assets, as well as indebtedness related to such assets, become the property of the newly formed district. The relinquishing of those assets, without a vote by the electorate, is a sticky legality being challenged by people questioning some aspects of ACT 46.

Board Chair Bruce Urie reported that School Board Chair Harry Miller has asked the board for legal clarification of town/school property ownership. The Craftsbury School District has been given

an stand-alone status under the State Board of Education plan implementing ACT 46. However, the status of the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union, of which Craftsbury is a part, is to be revisited in one year.

School Board member Mary Lou Rylands reported at a meeting last week that the state could move Craftsbury into the Orleans Central Supervisory Union. If that were to occur, the impacts are uncertain.

Craftsbury Academy is owned by private trustees, not by the Craftsbury School District. A new 100-year lease for Craftsbury Academy was signed by Miller. See **ASSETS**, 5



photo by Vanessa Fournier  
Charlie Bonfield (left) of Cabot celebrated his 100th birthday on Dec. 3, with 40 members of his family present in the Cabot United Church in Cabot. Pictured with him from left to right are New Milford (Bonfield) children, 84, of Conway, Me., and brothers Walter Bonfield, 91, of Cabot, and Clark Bonfield, 89, of Northfield. Charvia was born Dec. 13, 1918. Three brothers, Theodore, Robert and Richard are deceased.

## Wolcott to Serve as Pilot Town for \$350,000 Wastewater Project

by Doug McClure

**WOLCOTT** — The State of Vermont has selected Wolcott, East Burke and West Burke for a \$350,000 pilot project to help determine how to solve a lack of wastewater infrastructure for over 150 villages in Vermont. Over the next three years, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation will use grants from

the Northern Borders Regional Commission and other agencies to develop a pilot plan for Wolcott and Burke towns that could serve as a future model for other Vermont towns grappling with wastewater treatment issues.

Like many villages in Vermont, Wolcott's septic has made wastewater infrastructure a nonstarter. A major issue with not having wastewater infrastructure is the

own studies to come up with an economically feasible way to provide wastewater infrastructure and found an economically viable solution. Residents rely on their own septic systems permitted by the Agency of Natural Resources, and some of those systems in the village are believed to be failing.

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See PROJECT, 7



photo by Vanessa Fournier  
Classroomer Harry Bonsett of Hardwick works on a traffic study during the Robert Annual Veterans Class Workshop Open Studio Dec. 8. Harry and Honey Bonsett town born in business since 1928. The business started long ago in May of this year after having been shut down from a December 29 fire 200 years.

## Route 2, Main Street Intersection Considered Again

by Will Walters

**PLAINFIELD** — Plainfield has an intersection problem and it's not new. "We have been in touch with the state for 20 to 40 years about what to do with this intersection," Select Board Chair Ross Sneyd said about where Vt. Rte. 2 and Main Street meet in the upper village. Former select board chair Betsy Ziegler noted that the intersection has been a concern for the 21 years she has lived in the town.

Sneyd said he had been in touch with Erin Parizo, an engineer with VTrans, to try to get an update. He said that Parizo told him she had been in contact with

David Strong of Road Commissioner Brian Tobin a number of years ago. Sneyd said they were the ones who got the intersection issue raised with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission when they were with the select board.

Tobin and Strong met with Parizo, Bob White who is a right-of-way specialist, and James Devlin recently. Tobin said that three VTrans people discussed a number of scenarios, including moving the bridge. He said that Sneyd said he was looking for "a 100 percent" in lowering the grade that way. Tobin commented that this particular intersection is a

See INTERSECTION, 7

## New Town Manager Shaun Fielder 'Excited About' Position

by Doug McClure

**HARDWICK** — Hardwick now has a new town manager. After an exhaustive search, the board found what Select Board Chair Eric Remick described as "by far the best choice" for the job in Shaun Fielder. Fielder lives in Woodbury and said in a report he considers Hardwick his home community. He leaves a position as executive director of the Vermont Rural Water Association to come here.

Fielder is a lifelong Vermonter. He grew up in Middlesex, then attended college at UVM where he earned a bachelor's degree in geography. He furthered his academic career at the University of Minnesota, receiving his master's degree. He then returned to Vermont where he found a career in the water and waste water industry in the early 1990s.

Concurrently, current Town Manager Jon Jewett was with the Department of Environmental Conservation at the time and was one of the trainers who taught the basic wastewater training course Fielder attended. The two maintained their relationship, and Fielder also worked with Jon's late brother Jay who was in charge of the Plainfield water and wastewater facility at the time.

"I've worked on a lot of various things over the years," Fielder said. He and wife Laurie moved to Woodbury three years ago when she took a job as a caregiver. They have two grown sons, one of whom just graduated from college in Massachusetts and the other who is in his final semester of college in his last semester.

When he isn't working, Fielder said he loves the outdoors. He is a hunter, and he also enjoys a wide range of outdoor activities, including mountain biking. He said he is looking forward to trying out the single track on the Hardwick Valley Rail Trail. Another thing about Hardwick that Fielder is particularly excited about is the progress made on the Lamelle Valley Rail Trail. He sees a lot of future opportunities in the town and visitors alike to find here. He

noted that it's a place not only for recreation but with a vibrant downtown to keep people happy once their day outdoors draws to a close.

"You have everything you really need right here, more than most towns," said Fielder. "I know this because I travel to other parts of the state and other communities, not just in the Northeast Kingdom, but also throughout Vermont and central Vermont. You can get pretty much what you want here right in this downtown."

Fielder said that during the application process for the town manager position, he was not just in the Northeast Kingdom, but also throughout Vermont and central Vermont. You can get pretty much what you want here right in this downtown."

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"You would sometimes be able to trainings my association now is offering," said Fielder. "I have worked on a lot of various things over the years," Fielder said. He and wife Laurie moved to Woodbury three years ago when she took a job as a caregiver. They have two grown sons, one of whom just graduated from college in Massachusetts and the other who is in his final semester of college in his last semester.

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See FINDER, 7

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In Sports, 8  
HAZEN JV SCRAMMAGE  
WITH NZ TEAM

In Towns, 2  
STERLING STUDENTS  
DESIGN CURRICULUM

In Arts, 6  
CRAFTSBURY SCHOOL  
WINTER CONCERT