

Wolcott Approves Village Center Bid, Signs Loan Docs

by Doug McClure
WOLCOTT — The final meeting of the Wolcott Select Board for 2018 proved less dramatic than the agenda promised. A presentation to the select board by CAI Technologies about using web-accessible geographic information systems (GIS) mapping software as a neighboring towns such as Hardwick do was postponed for scheduling reasons until January. The board, however, did officially close out one pending town business in the under-an-hour meeting schedule remaining.
As reported earlier, the Wolcott Planning Commission submitted a request for approval from the select board for submitting a Village Center Designation request for North Wolcott to the state. Planning Commission Chair Jim Roberts and Lamoille County Planning Commission Regional Planner Meghan North briefly went over benefits the village center designation provides, its credit benefits that increase-producing properties can be eligible for, and also grants for facade improvements and priority access to state

grant monies. The select board signed off on the application, with an anticipated submission prior to January 1. This would mean that the state could consider the application as late as January.

The planning commission also had an ongoing matter as it is seeking a new member. Few names have come up thus far, and the commission is supporting interested Wolcott residents to contact the town clerk, Linda Martin, at wolcott@nh.gov.

The quorum of board members present also put their signatures on the final loan documents to pay for the School Street Bridge and an agreement for temporary safety on some town roads for a few more days in January.

In the ongoing matter of Pine Lake Lane, the board had no open loan but to postpone that hearing until the snow has melted, since the contractor is waiting for a site visit. That hearing is now tentatively slated to resume on May 1.

Select Board Chair Eric Pura said he has been preparing a proposed document about the



Lights on the bridge and trees make the swinging bridge in Hardwick look very festive.

Record-Shattering, Path-Altering, Ground-Drying Are 2018 Weather Themes

YEAR IN REVIEW

by Tyler Moulter

HARDWICK — 2018 featured substantial impacts on the way our local ecosystem works and the lives of our man-made structures and how they held up to Mother Nature.

Freezing of rivers occurring over the course of the week prior to the event, many waterways were put at risk for ice-on flooding as the snow approached.

Ice-on flooding is a common occurrence in the winter and spring in Vermont, but the amount of snow cover, rainfall and snow melt from temperatures in the 50s made rivers rise quickly, leading to worse ice jams than usual. This was especially true for the Lamoille River watershed.

The Wolcott Highway Department closed a portion of the North Wolcott Road from Sand Hill Road to West Hill Road for a two-week period while repairs were made to the road, which was damaged by the Branch River diverting around an ice jam. Temporary repairs to the road cost approximately \$40,000, ac-

ording to Tyler Billings-Lee of East Engineering in Greensboro. Those costs do not include the estimated \$130,000 worth of repairs which would need to be done in the upcoming construction season to bring the road back to its pre-flooding state.

Billings-Lee says as a contractor he has been awarded the project, he estimates it should take no more than a month to complete.

Problems were also evident further west in St Albans and Cambridge, where water from the Lamoille River also came over Vt. Rt. 15 from additional ice jams. Homes in Swanton also had to be evacuated as the Missisquoi River eroded out of its banks.

A snowstorm in mid-March dumped out of a foot of snow in some parts of northeastern Vermont. Greensboro reported 22 inches of snow, while Woodbury's total was just over 15 inches. Many school districts in the area closed for the day on March 14, and the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union built in an extra day of school two weeks later, as the schools in that district had already experienced at least four other closures in January and February for other poor weather conditions. The regional snowfall index rated the storm as a category 2 out of 5, with most impacts going unnoted.

An annual occurrence for May and for Vermont a tornado watch was issued after warm, moist conditions mingled with a cold front and strong winds on the evening of May 4. A line of thunderstorms traveled through

Act 46 Forced Merger Appeal Filed Last Week

by Doug McClure
MONTPELIER — On December 20, attorneys representing 30 school boards, seven select boards, one planning commission, 10 taxpayers who are also parents or grandparents of students or members of school boards, and six students, who would all be negatively impacted by forced mergers' filed a 72-page appeal for relief against the Board of Education's Act 46 forced-mergers orders from November 30.

The attorneys who prepared the appeal are local resident David Kelly, Ives McGilligan of Putney and Charles Merriman of Montpelier.

Local schools and towns joining the appeal include the Galois School Board and Select Board, Craftsbury School District, Greensboro School District and Select Board, Plainfield School District and Stannard School District.

The appeal cites over 300 specific examples to support six complaints of unconstitutional violation of powers, legislative intent, jurisdictional authority, procedural due process, equal protection and the United States Constitution. Also, the Vermont Constitution's Vermont State Constitution's Common Bonded Clause and Due Process.

Merriman said the attorneys would also file an expedited motion for preliminary appeal. "In sum, the motion will ask the

court to maintain the status quo (how things were before) until such time as it can rule on the merits of the appeal," explained Merriman. "The notion being that (a) things are moving very fast, based on a virtually unworkable timeline incorporated in the act and the order; (b) the court will not be able to rule on or appeal right away; (c) if the court doesn't stay the action, by the time the court gets to the merits, the issue will be a fait accompli that will cause irreparable harm to the appellants."

As the appeal sums up: "The Board's final Order [was] issued on November 30, 2018 and has already set into motion a series

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Summary of the Main Points of the Act 46 Appeal

Local resident David Kelly, one of the attorneys presenting the challenge to the Vermont Board of Education's mandates under Act 46, summarized the main points of the appeal for The Gazette:

"The defendants ignored the plain intent of the law. In Section 10 of Act 46, the General Assembly made it clear that the Board was only authorized to impose mergers to the

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Marathon Meeting Features Appreciation for Jon Jewett

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — The December 20 Hardwick Select Board meeting lasted two-and-a-half hours and featured a special appreciation for the town's long-time manager, Jon Jewett. For the board it was the final meeting of the year, for outgoing Town Manager Jon Jewett it was his last Hardwick Select Board meeting.

Public Works Foreman Tom Fadden was the bearer of news of one wanted to hear. A village truck used for sanding and plowing is down for the count without a clear prognosis or diagnosis. At the lower end would be equipping the town's newly-acquired F250 with a plow, which would cost in the \$6,800 range; at the higher end would be re-equipping the already-planned purchase of a new truck which would cost out to \$129,000, minus whatever the current truck trade-in value might be, around \$50,000. As a result, he reported, the village Town Manager Jon Jewett it was his last Hardwick Select Board meeting.

With that truck's warranty, Fadden also reported that "our sand piles are getting hit real bad right now." Business manager Casey Rowell estimated that as much as \$18,000 has been spent so far on sand and salt. But those items represent a substantial increase in the evolving FY 2019 budget due to price increases.

Safety in the diner parking was on the agenda again, with complaints about drivers cutting through at unsafe speeds. So no solution has worked. At Jewett's suggestion, the board asked Fadden with coming up with a solution that works, whether it be back-down plastic speed bumps or something else.

The select board heard from business owner Aubrie St. Louis, who said she has been a hard-core snow plow customer. She has purchased the assets of the Hairport area, a \$80,000 economic development loan from the town to make a home over, dubbed the "Beleef Shop." It will be a repair-themed salon, potentially expanding to include more space with an spa. St. Louis said she has always wanted to open her own shop and will be in Hardwick

A Year of Big Changes for Schools, Weather

YEAR IN REVIEW

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — Hardwick woke up to 2018 shivering. Schools shuttered and road crews found themselves struggling to keep roads ice-free. For generations of kids, a long-time staple of Hardwick's downtown, it wasn't the cold but a host of other issues led to a long-term closure of the town store to close officially on January 1 after 57 years.

Governor Phil Scott met with Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) on January 10 to discuss the needs of children with trauma and what the town's staff experienced trying to help these children.

As Hardwick entered February, Rite-Aid began conversations with a Walgreen's with the pharmacy department. The Center for an Agriculture Economy (CAE) announced a new program with Hazen students to reforest a long-desired greenhouse so children could grow their own vegetables as part of its outside-the-classroom lesson.

On February 14, an Parkland student, a former student entered the school and shot seventeen students dead. Two days later, all of Vermont learned vigilance had overtaken another shooting, this one was just over 100 miles away.

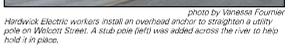
in Fair Haven. Governor Scott issued a February 22 memo to legislators expressing an "evolution in his long-held opposition to gun safety legislation."

At the end of February, Tops Friendly Markets filed for bankruptcy on February 21, the town's wishing town icon Lorraine House topped a happy 90th birthday at the Legion.

A town meeting came and went on March 6. Newly all 22 articles before Hardwick voters passed unanimously. Both the Hardwick Elementary and Hazen budgets also passed.

March saw the first of Governor Scott's gun safety bills pass unanimously. Also, Hazen and Hardwick gun violence epidemics. In solidarity with schools nationwide, on Monday, March 19, a group of class of 41, on March 15, Principal McCarthy and Associate Principal John Craig stood with the kids for 17 minutes of silence in devotion to remember the seventeen lives taken by the Parkland shooter.

Many of those same children. See HARDWICK, 6



Hardwick Electric workers install an overhead under to discontinue a utility pole on Wolcott Street. A stub pole (left) was added across the river to help hold it in place.

East Hardwick Seeks to Regain Own Revitalization

YEAR IN REVIEW

by Doug McClure

EAST HARDWICK — East Hardwick's big plan for the future in 2018 started with looking to its past while being the original town to be called Hardwick, founded in 1709 by Samuel Stone. Since then, however, present-day Hardwick, then known as South Hardwick, has lost its importance as an industrial center and its scale it led to become the Hardwick we know now.

As the year started, the town's residents in East Hardwick were re-starting in New England,

had been looking for funding to add an accessible entry to the building and an elevator. East Hardwick Advocate Cheryl Michaels said at the time that it became clear a Village Center Designation for East Hardwick designation would be helpful.

A Village Center designation would open doors for priority access to grants for preservation and restoration, something many residents felt was important due to the amount of architecturally significant structures still intact in the village.

An ad-hoc group was formed and gathered an overflow crowd of residents at the Group on May 6. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issue of how those benefits might be

well as hear from the Grange and other community organizations what they felt their role in the community would be and how a designation could help. Grange board member Gary Michaels estimated the Grange Hall needed at least \$125,000 in repairs to solve the accessibility issue, renovate the downstairs, and bring the structure up to code. Once complete, he said, the Grange Hall could provide a community gathering space for the greater Hardwick community. A community space would avoid the need for community functions and gather on overflow crowd of residents at the Group on May 6. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issue of how those benefits might be

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BAKER LEADS WILDCATS TO BIG WEEK

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EAGLE SCOUTS PROJECT BENEFIT TOWN

The Hardwick Gazette will not publish on January 2. The first edition of the New Year will be on January 9.