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photo by Doug McClure

The Hazen and Craftsbury School Boards at an Editorial May 20 meeting. Counterclockwise from the closest end of the table: Amy Rosenthal (Hazen), Andrew Meyer (Hazen), Anne Morse (Craftsbury), Ben Ferry (Hazen), Caleb Gallo-applicant (Hazen), Rachel Hulsey), Mary Miller (Chair, Craftsbury), Steven Finkelstein (Chair, Hazen), Beth Lewchenko (Hazen), Jen Nichols (Craftsbury), Mike Mikulka (Hazen), Mary Lou Retelle-Swanson (Craftsbury), Kenny Allen (Craftsbury) and Christopher Carey (Craftsbury).

Tick Bites Can Carry Disease

by Michael Dobinski

HARDWICK – According to the Center for Disease Control, Lyme disease is spreading at an aggressive rate and, as of last year, Vermont is considered to be one of the hotbeds in the nation for catching the disease.

"In Vermont, as in many other states in the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic and Upper Midwestern parts of the United States, tick-borne diseases, including Lyme disease, are on the rise," said Shawna Mueller, public health communication officer for the Vermont Department of Health.

"In the early 1990s, the Health Department would receive a dozen or fewer confirmed reports of Lyme disease in Vermont residents. Since that time, the number of reported cases has increased substantially. It is now common to see well over 800 confirmed cases each year.

"2017 was our highest year yet, with a total of 1,092 reported cases, but those numbers fluctuate from year to year," she explained.

Patti Casey, the environmental surveillance program manager for the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, took some time with the Gazette to explain some of the basics regarding what to look out for when dealing with ticks.

"Some basic personal protection is to avoid areas where ticks are as much as possible," she said. "Stay on pathways. If you are hiking, to stay on a path – don't stray into tall grass."

Casey said ticks tend not to be on short-cut grass, because what they are trying to do is latch onto passing creatures, and they need tall plants to do that. They don't, however, perform any fancy manoeuvers to make the big jump to their next prey.

"They do not jump, they do not fly, they do not drop out of trees – those are all myths. Avoid brush areas and leaf litter as much as possible," she continued.

The state lyme agency does recommend the use of EPA-approved insect repellents, which can help. She added that anyone spending

The black-legged tick (scuba explosion) is found throughout Vermont in habitat including woodlands and fields with tall grass and brush. Field activity typically occurs in May, June, October and November. Over 80% of all blacklegged ticks reported to the Vermont Department of Health are caught by the black-legged tick. (Source: healthvermont.gov)

regular time outdoors gardening, hiking or hunting should perform tick checks every day.

"Check yourself, your pets, your kids, your clothes, or whatever," she said. "Ticks can't fly, but within the window of concern, it needs to be embedded for 24 to 36 hours before it's able to transmit Lyme disease."

Mueller backed up that assessment. "The best way to avoid tick bites is to avoid tick habitat, wear EPA-registered tick repellent and treat clothing or gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin for tay clothing that is sensitive to skin. Shower soon after you come indoors, check your clothing, body and pets for ticks, shower soon after you come indoors, and tumble dry clothes on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing."

Casey said if you do find a tick embedded, "The first thing to do is not panic." She said get a pair

See TICK, 7

photo by Doug McClure

Robert Dragon III (in green) appeared in Caledonia County Superior Court on June 3 to answer charges of Driving with License Suspended (DLS), Eluding and Negligent Operation.

Suspect to Represent Self

by Doug McClure

ST. JOHNSBURY – Robert Dragon III appeared before Caledonia Superior Court Judge Robert R. Bent on June 3 to answer three charges: Vehicle Operation with a Suspended License for DUI, Vehicle Operation to Elude Law Enforcement, The charges stem from February 22, 2018, when according to then Orleans Police Chief Leslie of the Hardwick Police Department, (HPD), he attempted to stop Dragon for allegedly speeding and eventually trying to escape police. At today's appearance, Dragon dismissed Public Defender Jill Jordan for this and future cases.

When asked by Judge Bent if he had represented himself before, Dragon said, "Absolutely I have, in this courtroom. And I won."

Bent further clarified that Dragon needed to understand the rules of procedure and evidence, not just as defined by the legislative but also the courts. Dragon said, "I do understand that, your honor."

The judge later added if Dragon changed his mind and wanted a public defender, that would be great; that, but made no guarantee it wouldn't be Jordan. He reminded his counsel Dragon "does represent himself. "You do understand that you will be at a disadvantage in many ways?"

Dragon said he was affirmative on that on the night in question, while traveling south, he "observed a vehicle traveling north which appeared to be traveling over the posted speed limit" and after informing Dragon "was going 45 mph in a 30 mph zone on North Main Street. Police said when he turned on his lights, Dragon turned onto Creamery Road at speed and, as "the road was ill-timed very icy," the Cordia Dragon was allegedly driving was "fishtailing to the left and right, and almost hit a snow bank before sideling a left-hand turn onto Happy Hill Road."

Leslie said Dragon then turned onto Vermont Avenue and back down North Main Street, turning onto Wan Church Street, where "the subject pulled into a parking lot and ran away." He said the 1.3 mile pursuit involved speeds of up to 80 mph on Hardwick streets. Then-Officer Tetreault "patrolled the immediate area" but "officers could not find the vehicle, and Tetreault attempted to give chase onto Highland Avenue, where he "walked in the back of the parking lot and observed the subject over the bank from the parking lot to the snow." Detective Leah Dragon into custody.

At this appearance, Dragon asked if Judge Bent could have bills cut to "a larger town at state." Dragon wanted his half realized, because he worried about permanently losing property that was sold at tax auction last June. He said he wants to pay those taxes and wants to hire a "real attorney" for future cases.

"I need to be making some money," said Dragon, "so I can pay the [property] taxes so I don't lose that land, and so I can get prepared for my trial and hire an attorney for other cases. I would like to get a real attorney involved."

Judge Bent asked for that request in writing State's Attorney Rob Wilkinson and Dragon has twenty-four open dockets in the

See SUSPECT, 2

Hazen Union, Craftsbury Boards Seek Synergies

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – The Hazen Union and Craftsbury school boards met on May 20 in an informal setting to get to know one another better and foster inter-school collaboration for the students' benefit.

Board members brought food and drink and spoke on issues affecting both schools. Topics included school choice, collaboration academically and on extra-curriculars, and challenges the boards together could tackle more effectively. At the end, the parties left with a goal to come up with questions for the next meeting, in what Hazen board member Amy Rosenthal called an "Appreciative Inquiry." That meeting would seek to address challenges while incorporating the schools' philosophy.

"What is it," she asked rhetorically, "about Hazen, about Craftsbury, that we want to see remain unchanged? Imagine a dream project, where money was not an object – what are the things we love about our schools, what are the things we aspire? Thinking more wisely about what we have, and how to make it better, to make it more than the sum of its parts."

Craftsbury board chair Harry Miller had also previously mentioned focusing not just on the

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Circus Smirkus, Smirkus Camp Look to New Season

by Doug McClure

GREENSBORO – Just weeks before its June 29 show debut, Executive Director Jennifer Carr-Lopez of Circus Smirkus' 2019 Big Top Tents and at Smirkus Camp, Summer Camp Director William Pontbriand and Assistant Director Anita Silverman spoke about the Camp's expanded 2019 summer programs.

The Big Top Tent's 2019 theme is "Carnival," focused around carnival attractions. The Tent's 20 troupers will perform nightly 70 shows in seven New England states. The troupers range in age from 11 to 18.

Pontbriand and Silverman described the new opportunities in Smirkus Camp and their own backgrounds.

Silverman said she was a camper in 2011, and for her "camp was like a magic haven." Smirkus reached at the camp in 1999 and is back to teach after over 20 years in professional circus.

The first camp session will be an adult camp on June 6, the first kids' camp will be a "Smirkling"

photo by Doug McClure

Smirkus Summer Camp's Assistant Director Anita Silverman (top) and Camp Director William Pontbriand (bottom) pose in front of the star the summer's campers will enjoy between training sessions.

camp on June 10. Smirkling camps are overnight experiences for the youngest campers, 4 to 11 years old.

A quarter of the nearly-800 young campers are Vermonters, said Camp Administrative Director Robin Allen LaPlante, who sees exposure to the camp's diversity was a benefit. About 10% of the kids going to Camp Smirkus receive some form of financial aid; the camp awards

See CIRCUS, 6

If You Think State Roads Here Are Bad...

by Doug McClure

MONTPELIER – Vermont's extensive state road system "rated in a scale from "very poor" to "good" condition using two different methodologies, pavement and non-pavement roads, and, unsurprisingly, Caledonia, Lamoille, and Orleans rank the worst. Based on the state-published road inventory and schedule, things won't improve any time soon – very little paving work is scheduled for our area for this summer, and the lean decades since more roads have been rebuilt than paved, as noted by VTrans Asset Management and Performance Bureau said it is possible that many projects were not in that agency's VTransparency data).

Gov. Phil Kelly-Shay has not undergone roadwork in 20 years, and sections of Rte. 16 between Hardwick and East Hardwick have been rebuilt since 1999, according to Gretchen Bentley, Section 6 Rte. 14 south to Woodbury have been rebuilt since 1999, and Rte. 14 north to Woodbury