

## Twinfield Considers New Options Under Acts 46 And 49

by Will Walters

MARSHFIELD — The Twinfield Union School Board is considering its next steps going forward under Act 46. They met with the Cabot School Board Monday night to take a new look at options for both boards.

Act 49 changed Act 46 to expand the acceptable types of school district mergers under state guidelines.

For example, the Act provides for a "side-by-side regional educational district" where one side does not operate all elementary and secondary grades, or allows "three or more school districts to merge and the newly merged district, together with a preexisting district, are members of the same supervisory union at the completion of the process."

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## School Board Sets Out Timeline to Develop Act 46 Alternate Plan

by Will Walters

CABOT — With the failure of the June 20 meeting on merging Cabot and Marshfield into the Cabot School District, the Cabot School Board and Twinfield Union School Board are regrouping to see what alternate structures are available that will allow the districts to merge with Act 46.

The two boards met Monday night at the Cabot School Board to discuss common interests they can work on to develop an alternate structure agreement.

At its June 20 meeting, the Cabot Board recommended the district originally conceived by the Act 46 structure agreement, the so-called "Jackie Jackson handed out an outline of what the study committee proposed. They were out the line from their own discussion, the response from the public at public forums, and input from students — the group having the most at stake in the Act 46 process."

## Water Quality Bill Keeps Crews Busy

by Michael Bielewski

HARDWICK — The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (CWA) 1972, or "Clean Water Act," is a landmark piece of legislation that addresses water quality. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to report their progress in meeting the federal standards for the Clean Water Act.

The 2016 Water Quality Bill is a path to meeting the EPA's regulations. It focuses in part on preventing runoff into Vermont's waterways (10 V.S.A. § 204).

lack of interest in merging. However, the board met with the Cabot Board on Monday to begin discussions on an area of common interest.

An alternate structure with just Cabot would have both high schools continue to operate. This structure involves a project-based learning academy at Cabot and a stand-alone high school at Twinfield.

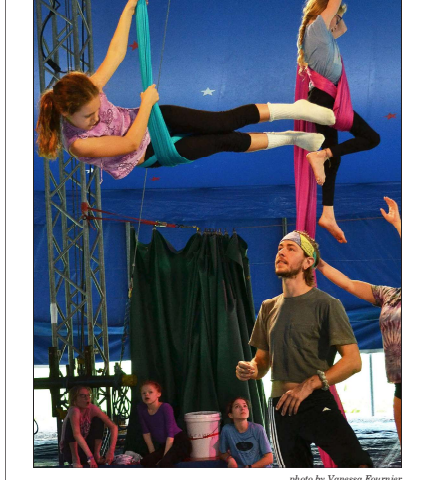
This structure is not "preferred" under current law, so there are neither tax nor financial incentives and it would mean losing the small-schools grant.

The board discussed three options.

One is forming a unified district with Barre, creating two high school and three elementary school districts. The new district would include Stoddard and Twinfield of the high schools and Barre City, Barre Town, Twinfield of the elementary and middle schools.

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**All Tied Up**  
Emily Mallory, 10, daughter of Melissa and Ryan Mallory, of Hardwick, practices performing on the Aerial Sling as coach Tanner Kool carefully watches and guides her. Eighty campers, ages 8-16, attended Session II for one week at Circus Smirkus Camp, in Greensboro.

## Smirkus Camp Invites Young and Not-So-Young

by Doug McClure

GREENSBORO — The rolling hills of Greensboro stretch out bright green and seemingly endless, tinged with the past of a rural Vermont environment only Vermont offers.

This particular pasture is dotted with an unusual group of Big Top Circus tents, an old farmhouse, joined by a few newer buildings.

the three "legs" of Circus Smirkus. The other two are Circus Smirkus arts and crafts camp and Circus Smirkus to schools, where trainers from the circus go to schools.

With near as many years under its belt as the Circus, the Camp is an important part of the mission of Circus Smirkus — passing its traditions on to the young, and now, not-so-young.

"It is the 'Smirkus style,'" which according to Camp Director Bill Merylees is "giving out love, teaching written in brightly colored chalk, perseverance."

Kids ages five to eighteen can enroll in camp. And now, adults can, too, with Smirkus Camp's Big Kid Camp.

"You'd be surprised," says Merylees. "We just started this in the past year, and we've got adults now who tell us they always thought they were clumsy and now they're walking tightropes and juggling."

For the skeptics out there, he points out that the circus arts have practical applications. They are athletic and teach discipline and commitment. Some of the Camp's graduates go on to Circus Smirkus as adults, too. There is no audition "in" for Smirkus Camp kids. Others go on to become entertainers, or performers.

Some graduates seem not to want to leave, having grown up in the circus environment of Smirkus Camp.

Elie Lonergan, whose family sold the farm to Smirkus Camp years ago, says "It was always my dream to be a little bit like the circus. Smirkus bought our house, so I don't need to run away to the circus for my dreams to come true."

She is a Counselor In Training and has camped for years. Today she is clearing weeds around the blueberry bushes.

Other kids have found some other uses for Smirkus Camp. Merylees points out the common refrain of campers that this is a place they can just go

themselves and not be judged."

He has his own story. As a former camper, he finds the Circus to be a "very gratifying place to work."

The spaces that the campers and counselors sleep in appear very much like a nice dorm room. The construction is basic, with concrete floors and rough-hewn walls, but the rooms are generally sized and comfortable. Each door has a chalkboard on it with the names of the campers who are staying there written in brightly colored chalk.

What is conspicuously absent is television, or any electronic device. The common areas are for community. At night, campers hold dress-up parties, a sort of informal theater performance. Each booth is gender-oriented, to reinforce Smirkus' inclusive environment.

There are two dormitory buildings which bear the names of prominent entertainers: Marcell Marceau, the famous mime, and Charlie Chaplin, the "Great Entertainer."

This is an inside reference. Bill Merylees, founder of Circus Smirkus, did what many kids wanted to do and ran away to circus. He was a member of the circus in the 1970s. In his travels, he met both Marceau and Chaplin, according to Merylees, and smaller lettering on the tent, teaching the circus stands on its own. This tent needs its private because the training is very intense and can't have any distractions.

And that is the experience in sum: Smirkus Camp is fun and serious at the same time. Despite eighty kids on the premises, it does not feel like a crowded barn because today was their last chance to share for a presentation to their parents. After that performance, the "Great Entertainer" will be over.

The campers' schedule is exhaustive. They have their dinner with a very diverse range of food, always offering gluten-free or veggie options. The converted barn where the kids eat is big and bright, with chairs are a rainbow of colors.

## NEK Lags Behind Rest of Vermont in Broadband

by Doug McClure

A decade ago, the State of Vermont launched an ambitious plan to get broadband internet to all corners of Vermont by the end of 2010. In 2015, the state scaled back the agency responsible for this project and moved it to the Department of Public Service (DPS) as the Division for Telecommunications and Connectivity.

The Division's goal is to get high-speed internet to under-served areas of the state using a combination of grants and leaving their own fiber network to private companies.

**Fiber vs Copper**

Fiber networks are critical to providing fast internet services to homes and businesses. Much of the internet service in the NEK runs over copper instead of fiber, running on dead-end wires that run over copper instead of fiber. Essentially, a large percentage of the wired internet service in the NEK runs over wires designed to handle telephone calls.

Much of the copper-based internet uses Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) technology. With DSL, the actual speed you get depends on how far someone is from their provider's network station.

**Why Access is Important**

With the increasing uses of "cloud" or internet-based services such as Gmail, much of a business' operations take place over the internet. In addition, more and more companies are having employees work from home to save expense. This is highly relevant in Vermont where a major snowstorm can make working remotely the best or only way to maintain productivity.

For schools, many of the same reasons apply. In addition, schools rely on their internet connectivity to expose students to other cultures and live events in ways that would not have been possible a decade ago.

And for the home user, more and more of the content we consume — video, music, news — is internet-based.

Society has become more and more dependent on the internet. The United Nations has declared internet access a "basic human right." See **BEHIND PAGE FOUR**

## Fairpoint Merges with Consolidated Communications

MATTON, IL. — Consolidated Communications announced it has completed its \$1.81 billion merger with North Carolina-based Fairpoint Communications in an all-stock transaction. Fairpoint serves many areas in Vermont.

The shareholders approved the transaction on March 28, and all state regulators approved the merger.

Consolidated Communications stated that it will introduce more advanced options, better customer service, and more reliable service as it expands the use of fiber networks in Vermont.

This deal makes Consolidated the sixth-largest fiber-based internet service provider in the U.S.

## Greensboro DRB Rejects Old Firehouse Appeal

by Doug McClure

GREENSBORO — In a 7-0 decision, the Greensboro Development Review Board (DRB) rejected Nancy Benez's appeal over the use of the Old Firehouse at 83 Breese Avenue.

The DRB's decision rules against a government or public body as not a requirement for a public building, the contextual utilization of the definition as "conditional uses" within zoning districts of the Town of Greensboro, and the definition containing uses that their designations, leads the DRB to conclude [sic] that property at 83 Breese Avenue no longer meets the requirements as both of an institutional nature and serving a public need.

"If the Town had stripped the property of its public building status at the time of the sale, and in so doing the Town of Greensboro would have sold on an unpermitted building, I would like to think better of the Town of Greensboro than that they would sell an unpermitted building."

Randy Schibler responded to the DRB's decision by agreeing to the DRB's decision, but saying "The building design is something that is grandfathered in for non-conforming buildings, and non-conforming that pre-date restrictions placed by zoning and their continued use as such is permitted."

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WHAT I LOVE  
ABOUT HARDWICK  
Hardwick  
Trails 00

Marley, age 3, attended Hardwick's First Friday Festival with family members Hillary Seel and Matt Renaud. Asked what he loved about the event, Marley said, "The Hardwick Trails!"

photo by Vanessa Fournier

See CAMP PAGE TWO