

COPS Grant is Part of Budget Vote, Cement Blocks Removed from Parking Lot

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Town manager Jon Jewett gave an update on all the latest rumblings around town, including clarification on the COPS grant, an update on the parking lot barriers next to the Village Restaurant, and the road crew.

The COPS grant, a \$125,000 grant for hiring a new officer op-

posed in December by the select board, is a part of the final town meeting which will be voted on at Town Meeting in March. The public does not specifically vote on the COPS grant or the hiring of an additional police officer; they only vote on the total town budget.

On the same topic, Jewett said he can't give specific estimates on what the officer will cost taxpayers

(the grant amount stays the same no matter who is hired), but he said that insurance costs will be the main variable.

"Many of the costs are related to life and health insurance," he said. "If the officer is a family, or if the officer is single."

He said if the officer is a single person then the health insurance costs would be less than half the insurance costs for an officer with a family. However, the town has budgeted for the most expensive scenario and will be hired based on the quality of the candidates.

"We're not going to hire people who are not qualified," he said. "As far as we're interested that insurance will be the big cost determinant. As far as a new police position will be for a patrol officer and there will not be a new vehicle purchase to correspond with the hiring. Council said as far as a timeline goes, the new hire will be for the next fiscal year. In intervening wouldn't start for a few months."

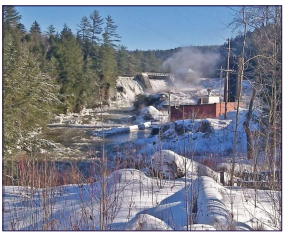
During the fall, complaints started to mount around town about cars illegally cutting through the Village Dinner's parking lot, rather than to turn left into it. Some residents felt it a safety hazard.

An ice build-up on the Lamoille River during the brief thaw and

ice edges closer to the bottom of the bridge on Route 15. With many rivers in the region jacking up, it is likely that this section of the Lamoille's history of flooding, people are eyeing the forecast closely as the next January snow takes place at the end of the week.

photo by Doug McClure

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A cold morning mist rises from the Lamoille River in Woodstock at the power plant dam as a river of ice covers the dam's downstream face.

HES Approves Proposed Budget

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — The elementary school board has approved its budget, and the budget text goes on to voters on Town Meeting day.

The total school budget is \$4,292,400, estimated to be the total education spending of \$1,937 per-qualified pupil, about 1.98 percent higher than the prior year, but still below the state's penalty threshold. The board set the tuition rate at \$13,700.

While many on the board agreed that they would like to have seen something lower, they also acknowledged that they don't want to cut away from the budget.

Board member Kevin Moore, who is wrapping up his first year with the board, hinted it will be interesting to see what happens at the state level considering the latest rhetoric from Governor Phil Scott.

"The governor made pretty clear in his address that he has no interest in seeing a 10-cent tax increase in reference to education spending," he said. "How it's going to shake out, and when it's going to shake

out... who knows?" Scott has referenced in his recent speeches that Vermont has around a 4-to-1 staff-to-student ratio, well below the 6-to-1 ratio of most of the rest of New England.

Lefebvre said her office will withdraw a request for a new part-time position to help manage the phone and other work.

This matter has been a contentious issue for superintendent union school boards through-

out the budget season. "In light of what everyone is going through, there's not much room in adding something to that office, we're just going to have to figure out how to make it work," she said. "Everyone else is having to do that."

This move will result in savings from the school that include \$5,500 for Hardwick Elementary.

Lefebvre explained that because the bonding project to make improvements to the entry-way to the building will not begin until this summer, the principal cost is not due for this iteration of the budget, and was thus taken out.

According to Hardwick Elementary School board chair Jennifer

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Jeudivine Trustees' Chairperson to Step Down

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — There will be a changing of guard at the Jeudivine Library Board of Trustees' Chairperson Jerina Papp will step down by next Town Meeting.

"My term is up and therefore it is a good time to hand over the reins to a new person," Papp said in an interview. "The new president is JoEll South. She's worked with the library on the building addition project, has been very active in civic affairs, and will be a good partner for the library trustees."

For years, Papp oversaw board meetings, public meetings, at-

tended workshops and lobbied the library building which has considerably less space and fewer facilities than libraries serving other towns with a population similar to Hardwick's.

But, despite several years of planning and preparation by the board, architects and potential donors, the expansion was voted down by a wide margin.

Lefebvre said the development of a new expansion proposal will be at the top of the library's priorities to expand and improve the current facilities that the library can offer the community.

see JEUDIVINE, 6

DEC: Formal Rule-making Decision on Great Homner Pond on Hold

by Jane Pichler Cook

CRAFTSBURY — Commissioner Emily Boedeker released a letter last week sharing possible next steps in resolving conflicts on Great Homner Pond.

"The decision is not to proceed to formal rule-making yet," Commissioner Boedeker explained in a phone interview. "But I'm just about settling and fast motorboats."

Over-simplification of the conflict as being between motorboating and sailing may be immediate and as- sistent for parties concerned, but not for the state when looking at the broader context of all the lakes and waterbodies across the state.

Boedeker stated, "Fundamentally it is the Great Homner Pond conflict) is an issue of residency, investment, and the carrying capacity of a waterbody."

As an example, she noted, when visiting a trail that is heavily used, and the parking lot is full, you might just go on to another place and hike at a different trail.

"When you are a resident, as both the Craftsbury Outdoor Center and camp owners are, it's not as easy to take your activity elsewhere. Both have made financial commitments and commitments to their communities."

In 2017, draft language proposing a regulation of cars and days was

see HOSMER, 8

Clean Water Act Cost Debate Continues

by Michael Bielawski

WOODSBURY — At the January 8 select board meeting, it was determined that the town's participation in the Clean Water Act (CWA) would be used to modify hydrologically-impacted areas.

The cost of this work has been an issue around town. In Montpelier, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is working on funding for the Clean Water Act almost daily this legislative session.

A 2017 legislative report estimated that \$15 million a year is necessary to address the state's water-quality concerns.

see WATER, 7

The town is looking at work on one section of the Lake Champlain. Most of the project would be covered by the state.

"To look at the thing as a whole project, we had to do that segment, and that became a town out-board chair Michael Gray said. "To that end, because you could do those two lower segments and then all of the other work that we look at the thing next summer, we will look at it as a whole."

see WATER, 7



Governor Phil Scott speaking with OSHA Supervisor and OSHA Director of Support Services Heather Winters at the conclusion of a safety training in Hardwick. Commissioner of Education Rebecca Holcombe (far left) with OSHA Supervisor, Sharon Ledford (second from left).

Governor Meets With School Leaders in Hardwick

by Ray Small

HARDWICK — Governor Phil Scott met with school leaders at the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) offices in Hardwick yesterday. Although the meeting was public, it was not publicized. A member of the OSSU staff said that the governor "didn't want a huge media presence."

Ellaine opened the meeting, setting the agenda as a discussion about "children with trauma and how we meet their social and emotional needs."

The presentations following focused on several themes, including

the need to address student trauma as a family issue, not just a school issue; the earlier the intervention, the higher the probability of success; and successful assistance required high integration between school and local state and support services.

Merrin Green, the principal of Trifolium Academy, was the first presenter.

"I have been a principal for 33 years. In the last 5 years, I have seen changes I would have predicted. There has been a tremendous spike in mental health issues, especially among female students. The issue is not classroom behavior, we don't have tantrums. Ten percent of our middle and high school girls have been diagnosed with significant mental health issues. We have girls cutting (themselves), who have been hospitalized in mental hospitals."

see TRAUMA, 7

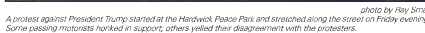
Advantage Cabot Impresses Scott

by Will Walters

CABOT — A public forum on Advantage Cabot had about 20 people in attendance to hear about the progress being made in building support for the project.

Advantage Cabot was established as an alternate method for maintaining student enrollment in Cabot School, with the objective of helping the school meet Act 46 requirements and the state's goal in independent school district. It is an independent governing board targeting out-of-district students who will attend Cabot School and be housed with local students.

see ADVANTAGE, 7



A protest against President Trump started at the Hardwick Peace Park and stretched along the street on Friday evening. Some protesters marched in support, others yelled their disagreement with the protesters.

President Trump's Comments Lead to Flash Protest in Village

by Ray Small

HARDWICK — Martha Zveig can be found sitting on the bench in front of the Hardwick Peace Park most Friday nights regardless of the weather. She usually has a sign protesting a political policy of social injustice and hands out fliers

detailing the issue or issues she is protesting.

Last Friday night, Zveig had an unusual amount of company in her protest. Eight other area residents appeared with signs, banners and a trumpet to protest Donald Trump. Trump's alleged vulgar characterization of African and other nations as "shithole countries" (a characterization denied by multiple people at the meeting, including President Trump) was a jolt that had some area residents into the street.

Dominic Cotiglino from Barton joined the protest in front of the Peace Park, with his wife Donna Druchman. Druchman said that she had seen a notice on Facebook and decided she needed to do something.

"We have a racist president. We should protest all year, but we didn't," she explained.

Josh Krugman, a puppeteer, bread baker, and booking manager at Bread and Puppet Theater echoed her motivation: "Every so often the president says something

so heinous that we're goaded into the streets."

Several protesters carried hand-lettered signs, while others held elaborate banners making "What Fear" and "How Much Longer?"

Not everyone supported the protesters. A car drove up and down South Main Street several times. Each time, the driver leaned out of the window and yelled "Let's go, Trump!"

After the line of protesters extended beyond the Peace Park to the front of The Gazette building, local business owner Lawrence Hamel called to inquire whether the paper had sponsored the protesters and said that the protesters should be held to vote. Informed that The Gazette had nothing to do with the protests, Hamel suggested checking the protesters' permits, which the paper is not authorized to do.

"We have a racist president. We should protest all year, but we didn't," she explained.

For her part, Martha Zveig, 6

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