

BOSSU To Defend Alternative Structure Proposal

by June Pichel Cook

CRAFTSBURY — The Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union's (OSSU) proposal for a Section 4 Alternative School Structure under Act 46 was presented to the Agency of Education (AOE) in November of last year. Superintendent Joanne LeBlanc reported to the school board that a meeting will be held on March 8 at the AOE to respond to questions regarding the proposal.

Repeated emphases throughout the questions raised are "sustainability," "chronically underserved," "detailed actions," "transparency," and "operational effectiveness."

Board Chair Harry Miller and Vice Chair Mary Lou Ryland-Ibanon will represent the Craftsbury School District. LeBlanc suggested a pre-meeting discussion be held prior to meeting with Secretary of Education Deborah G. Labaree.

The delegation will argue that the alternative structure provides "substantial equity in the quality and variety of educational opportunity in a sustainable manner. Delegation members are expected to explain the detailed actions the district will take to continue to improve in serving "chronically underserved" students. The response must address the proposed approach to district students "from other districts in the region."

The next question is how does the alternative structure "lead to the achievement or exceed the State's education Quality Standard in a sustainable manner. Again, the district must justify how it will serve chronically underserved students in a manner compared to other districts in the region.

Question 3 seeks information on the district's "existing operational efficiencies," with a goal of increasing the district-level ratio of students to full-time equivalent staff. Detailed actions are requested.

Topics 4 and 5 seek an explanation of how the proposal will promote transparency and accountability in a "sustainable" way and deliver education at a "cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value" in a sustained way.

The defense of an alternative structure, which is allowed under Act 46 in lieu of a merger, grows on the questions: Why is a merger not possible and not practicable?

If the OSSU is not proposing an enlargement or merger, then the question is asked, "Why merge?" The State Board of Education has previously stated that it may redraw the boundaries as allowed under 16 V.S.A.

Superintendent LeBlanc had explained at an earlier meeting that the alternative structure proposed by the OSSU essentially keeps the school districts as separate units, but with more emphasis on collaboration. An alternative structure allows for a supervisory union "composed of multiple member districts, each with its separate school board and its own superintendent. Multiple member districts may meet the State's guidelines if it is a voluntary response" for serving PK-12 students and comply with Special Education and transportation requirements. It must serve an ADM of approximately 900 students.

Under Act 46 the State Board of Education (SBE) may approve the transfer of up to 66 percent of the enrollment of a supervisory union.



Shorewoodville arrives at the Walden Methodist Church Sunday for the 48th Annual Calais Post Students Southwind. Thirty-two volunteers participated in the fundraiser which had 224 people. To show their appreciation to the land owners, the club invited them as guests to the event. Door prizes were drawn throughout the event.

photo by Vanessa Fournier

One Candidate for Hazen Union Principal Withdraws, Remaining Candidate Offered the Job

by Michael Bielawski and Ray Small

HARDWICK — A Monday evening forum at Hazen Union School was meant to provide the community an opportunity to meet and question the two finalists selected by the school board to replace interim principal Jack McCarthy. In a last-minute surprise, Hazen's Associate Principal John Craig with drew his candidacy, leaving David Perrigo as the sole candidate.

According to Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) Superintendent Joanne LeBlanc, Craig withdrew after reviewing the requirements of the position. He has a young family and decided that the time commitment of leading a school was not a good fit for him. "He did what's right for his family," said LeBlanc.

David Perrigo

The school board deliberated after Perrigo's Monday night speech and unanimously offered him the job. He is currently deciding whether to accept the offer.

"David did a good job," said LeBlanc. "I hope to hear back from him later in the week."

David Perrigo is an experienced educator who has held a variety of positions in schools across the north-

"I was a student who loved learning, but I wasn't great with school. I struggled with school, and there was a disconnect there. He said that during his teens he started to drift into bad habits, but he was drawn back to school through his love of the arts and by a caring theater teacher, who turned him back with lead roles on the stage."

The lesson of his own experience, he said, is that educational leadership needs to be operational with school, and there was a disconnect there. "For me, educational leadership has been about trying to see if we can do things different for our current students, so that they don't experience the same kinds of things that I experienced as a student," he said.

Perrigo's education career started in Boston, where he was the founder of a school called the New Mission High School, which failed to this philosophy. He then worked with other schools in the Boston area, before taking a job at Richford High School for five years and then returning to Massachusetts for a job at the State School in Fitchburg.

He said he has strong ties to Vermont and plans to start a dairy farm in Glover for many years.

See PRINCIPAL, 9



Wolcott students in grade K-Popozocans (center), Marry Carli (right) and Tyler Whitego (left) enjoy cross-country class at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center recently. Students in grades K-6 participated in a winter activity of their choice for four weeks which ended Feb. 15. Swap or snowboarding at Stone Mountain Resort or skating at the Stone Regatta was the other choice.

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Maple Season is Creeping Up

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Maple season may sneak up sooner than usual, thanks to a brief stretch of warm weather this week from Monday through Wednesday. At least a few local sugar operations are planning to get things started.

"It's definitely going to be running," Mario Fialette of Craftsbury Maple Syrup. "This is the earliest I've ever seen, though this is going to be the sixth year that started in February. It's kind of the norm here."

Fialette said he's been sugaring since 1974, and he bought this farm in 1984 from his father. He has arrangements with two other farms in the area to sugar additional trees in 200 sugar acre all.

He said they had a sap run on the Tuesday evening of last week, and this week it could get going again, as temperatures are expected to get up to the mid-50s.

"You never get to the back if you are not ready," he said. He said all of his trees tapped out of about three weeks ago.

"A lot of guys say all these days,

they are not ready," he said. Fialette said that prices are based on the amount of sugar that has gone down this year. He said that it is mostly the bulk price that drops, while the retail price is less volatile.

This year, Fialette will be using containers with a logo designed by one of his grandchildren. He said that over the last five years, his operation has hosted students from Greensboro's Lakeside Elementary School a few times a year, usually grades K-2. At these events, they collect canned goods for the local food bank.

Cody Thompson of Thompson Farm is another member of maple getting things going.

"There is a number of people out there. Luckily, we were tapped on time," he said. "The last couple of years it seems like we're starting a little earlier every year."

Thompson said that it is a family business and they have a farm stand in the village between Maple Greens and the Craftsbury General Store.

"We could go bigger, but it's nice just to make quality maple."

See MAPLE 4

Donor To Create Scholarship Endowment For Twinfield

by Will Waters

MARSHFIELD — The legislature is considering changes to the educational funding formula, said Superintendent Mark Pichette, with the purpose of relieving some pressure on property taxes which fund the education. Reducing the property tax rates would be partly offset by introducing a new income-based education tax that would apply to taxpayers with an adjusted gross income greater than \$47,000.

Tucker said the announcement in his report at the Twinfield Union School Board's recent meeting.

He said there continues to be a need for changes because of the FY19 state education payments, on budgets that are being offset by the changes would be retroactive to the law.

to create a scholarship fund for Twinfield Union School. Smith's intention is to create a \$100,000 endowment with the interest being used to provide scholarships. Smith indicated a preference for scholarships to be given to residents of Marshfield, but will leave it to the administration to establish the award criteria and administer as it sees fit.

Smith said he will begin making donations to the endowment now and over the next 10 years, with his estate fulfilling the shortage from the intended \$100,000 if he does not survive to complete it himself.

Principal Mark Mooney said the League of Innovative Schools

conducted a workshop at Twinfield and Cabot schools recently. Some educators have been trying a new system of having their lessons filmed for review by their peers, who comment on the teacher's instructional decisions.

Mooney said the school will show the movie "Screenagers," which looks at the impact of technology on young people, so that they don't experience the same kinds of things that I experienced as a student."

A special screening of "The Post" was held for middle- and high-school students. The film documents the struggle between the Washington Post and the Nixon administration over print journalism during the Pentagon Papers.

In Sports

Hazen Girls Swimming to Top Spot

Winnecook to Post

Stannard to Post

Winning Week for Hazen Boys

Salvaged Week for Chargers



Photo by Vanessa Fournier

Local Police Keeping Eye on Montpelier

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Some bills and state policy proposals under consideration in Montpelier that have caught the eye of Hardwick Police Chief Aaron Cochran. In such cases, the potential impact on policing quality and costs could negatively impact Hardwick.

One proposal lawmakers would no longer have the Vermont State Police provide coverage to small towns. Towns without their own coverage would have to contract with nearby police departments, or establish their own police force. Either option would require a significant increase in town spending.

"Facing those small towns to hire out to other towns who have police departments, or having their own..." Cochran said. "I don't know which means it was down there, that came up with this bill, but one of them decided that this is a good idea, so there is a lot of discussion going on about this bill."

Another bill regards the governor's highway safety program. Each year the department applies for grants from the Agency of Transportation (VT), which would provide funding. A possible change is to award grants to counties rather than individual towns.

"One person would hold the grant, and they would decide where the patrols were, who was doing the patrols, etc., for the whole county," Cochran said.

Cochran said he and town manager Jon Jewett opposed this plan because the current system works well in getting extra patrols in Hardwick.

Another proposal would move officer licensing, which is currently under the Criminal Justice Training office, to the Secretary of State's office.

"Each police officer would have to pay a licensing fee every year, or the town they work for would have to pay it every year, which I heartily do not see that \$100 per officer," he said. "So it would be a big hurt to our budget, and even on a higher scale for Burlington or some other town, it would be a big hurt."

Jewett said that centralizing administration is part of a statewide trend.

"They did it to wastewater operators, they are going to do it to water system operators. You have all different groups that are affected," he said.

The Hardwick Area Restorative Justice Program (HARP) Card Place and Karen Haines.

See POLICE, 4

Woodbury Select Board Member Cleared in State Probe

by Michael Bielawski

MONTEPELIER — The former state aviation administrator and current Woodbury Select Board member Guy Roelle had been under a state investigation for alleged misuse of public funds during his time working for the state. A press release from the Vermont Attorney General's office has stated that there will be no charges against Roelle.

"Having completed the review of the matter, the Attorney General's Office declines to prosecute due to insufficient evidence of criminal conduct," the release reads. "This matter was investigated by the Vermont State Police with assistance from the Attorney General's Office and the Vermont State Police in October, 2017."

The investigation came to light after a Vermont State Police investigation in the state needs to stretch over \$1 million in state funds from its aviation division. Numerous airport owners expressed frustration at the investigation.

After leaving his position, Roelle was

public funds inappropriately. Despite the fact of a prosecution, Secretary of Transportation Joe Pynn maintains that wrongdoings had occurred.

"While there is insufficient evidence to bring criminal charges, it is clear the agency's previous internal controls were abused and our changes are intended to prevent it from occurring again," Pynn said.

"The state and Roelle have been at odds after he left his position with the state for the private sector. On his own way out, Roelle made public announcements that the state was failing to provide adequate support for runway improvements at Woodbury State Airport."

Further escalating tension, the investigation came to light after a Vermont State Police investigation in the state needs to stretch over \$1 million in state funds from its aviation division. Numerous airport owners expressed frustration at the investigation.

After leaving his position, Roelle was

See CLEARED, 9

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