

Dairy Prices Continue to Hurt Local Farmers

by Michael Bielawski
HARDWICK – For three years and counting, dairy farmers have been struggling with low milk prices. Jon Lauster of Hardwick highlighted the impact on local dairy farmers during a recent visit to Hardwick by U.S. Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.).

"The problem is that while the price of seed, feed, fertilizer, and gasoline keep going up, the cost of milk stays the same or drops. Lauster doesn't own a farm, but he does buy and sell cows and does other work in the industry. He estimated that low prices are spilling an end for the family dairy operation that was once a cornerstone of Vermont's economy.

"So our country is driving them out and they can't make ends meet," he said. "They can't pay their bills, a lot of them are having trouble making their mortgage payments."
 He said a global economic, including a strong dollar, is part of the problem.

"So our country is not able to buy their dairy products out of their own market," he said. "They're not getting a lot of their exports. I think a year and a half ago our exports went down 20 percent, so our country had to absorb that volume."

According to the January, 2018, Report and Recommendations of the Vermont Milk Commission, the average price paid to Vermont dairy in 2014 was \$23.03. By 2017, the average price had dropped to \$17.11, a decline of nearly 26 percent.

Lauster also noted that the state's dairy workforce population is aging; there are very few young people getting in and, currently, there is no market among dairy processors for any new product.

"I never thought I'd see the day when somebody calls and they want to sell a herd of cows, or a whole bunch of heifers or anything like that, and I just tell them that I have no market anymore. There's just no way to move them."

According to Peter Cebbia of Cabot's Mapleburn Farm in Greensboro, just recently prices have fallen by another 10 percent, with hundreds (hundreds) of pounds of milk to be sold somewhere between \$17 and \$20 per hundredweight just to break even.

"That doesn't mean that people in the U.S. couldn't be paid more for their milk. For instance, right now we've taken a price drop, but you probably won't see any country had to absorb that volume."

See DAIRY, 2

Round Three: Cabot School Board to Meet April 25

by Will Walters
CABOT – The revote of the school budget showed little movement in the percentage of voters who may have changed positions, or at least a difference of what voting ballot showed up. The revote had 449 ballots cast, compared to 581 cast on Town Meeting Day. Of that, 71 percent of those first time. On Town Meeting Day, 59 percent of the ballots were cast "no" on the school budget, while on the revote 57 percent were cast "no."
 The second budget of \$1,596,885 had a reduction of \$103,000 from the original proposal.

Superintendent Mark Tucker said the school board will meet April 25 to discuss the budget. He said he will have to be extremely concise in his presentation, saying he is spending too much. What he is not willing to give up is to be able to support the school next year.

Resident Richa Hourigan said she is not sure how the school board and she amongst themselves, voters should get on the phone and call legislators and tell them to stop playing with school funding. He said the school board is then going to target, at the legislature. He said the town's budget is then going to call legislators who develop school funds and then they would have to work with means and appropriations for the school. He said that when her frustration they create.

"And call them at home, too," said Tucker.

American Legion Celebrates Its 99th Anniversary

by Michael Bielawski
HARDWICK – The American Legion had its 99th-anniversary celebration last Saturday evening and Hardwick's own American Legion Post 7 joined in the celebration.

About 90 people attended the evening festivities, despite it being a snowy evening. Either just past around the nation had similar events that night.

"We put on an at-near-dinner available to our members. They include leguminates, they include Sons of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary members, and also American Legion Riders, George Gatton, commander at American Legion Post 7 said.

This anniversary is to be distinguished from the founding of Post 7, which was chartered in 1946. The national organization was chartered by Congress in 1919, according to the Vermont Planners Association.

The awards will be presented on April 19, at 4 p.m. in the Vermont Statehouse's Cedar Creek Rooms.

According to the Vermont Planners Association award citation, "Known as the 'father of the American Legion,' Elmer Hough was the Vermont originator of the Vermont Planners Association. The awards will be presented on April 19, at 4 p.m. in the Vermont Statehouse's Cedar Creek Rooms.

photo by Doug McClure
 A crane assists with disassembling the old House 1 bridge in East Montpelier. The new bridge just opened.



photo by Linda Mae O'Connell
 Celebrating the 99th Anniversary of the American Legion with a large group of members, including Governor George, Mark O'Leary. The birthday cakes were made by Joanne Melting and Jennifer Llopis.

Cabot's Peg Elmer Hough Wins Vermont Planning Award

by Doug McClure
MONTEPELIER – Peg Elmer Hough of Cabot is one of this year's planning awards recipients from the Vermont Planners Association. The awards will be presented on April 19, at 4 p.m. in the Vermont Statehouse's Cedar Creek Rooms.

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"Throughout her varied and distinguished career as a land use planner, Peg has helped Vermont protect critical land and water resources, energy efficiency and reducing the social networks that binds our communities vital and safe."

As Planning Director of the Vermont DECA Planning Division, Hough has the Governor's Office and the Vermont Center Pilot project.

by Doug McClure

School Safety Plan Under Development

by Doug McClure
MONTEPELIER – With \$8 million on the table for school safety, divergent views on how to maximize that investment to make schools safer have emerged. Several approaches are under discussion.

ALICE Training
 ALICE stands for Alert, Lock, Down, Inform, Counter, Evacuate. The proposal is to have Hardwick Elementary School students through books at the shooter, or tangle them, or run zig-zag to evade the threat.

Hardwick Police Chief Robert Cochran endorsed that approach at the April 5 select board meeting.

Critics have said the training might be dangerous and could set students back. If, for example, the students see one shooter and get after him or her, there could be a second shooter they did not see.

The two Columbine shooters acted in tandem.

As a Vietnam combat veteran, he says he's not sure about the approach. He said he's not sure about the approach. He said he's not sure about the approach.

"We called it the serpentine. If you're running toward five, you're zig-zagging back and forth as you're not an easy target. So, some of that makes sense. Shelter-in-place (the current approach) has been thought to be a much more appropriate – just find a classroom and tangle in and hide. My experience (in Vietnam) is that there are times that you take cover and there are times you run towards the gunfire. I've got to tell you from experience, it takes a lot of heart to run toward gunfire," said Troiano. "I certainly question going on the approach using an armed individual to do that."

"We're teaching [students] to fight for their lives," Cochran said at the April 5 select board meeting, "because they're in the fight for their lives."

The youngest children, according to reports, are trained to recognize the shooter using puppets. The one wearing a police uniform is not one to worry about.

A criticism of the training is that it could traumatize children by training them for an event that statistically is unlikely. Another is potential liability from injuries caused by the training. An insurance company told Maines' Portland Press Herald that the drills themselves have resulted in injuries related to running to tangle, bumping, tripping, running into door jams, jumping off furniture.

Troiano said he wanted to see an independent study of ALICE before considering whether the approach is sound and whether it justifies its cost.

"I would have to defer to studies on that," he said.

Troiano. "I think that people do things that will guarantee that approach and not looking to make money by training students to be a candidate, or possible perpetrator."

Chief of Resources Officers (EROs) option is endorsed by Chief Cochran and many law enforcement agencies across Vermont.

"I'm not sure about the approach (Orleans/Caledonia) has previously," said Troiano.

See SAFETY, 7

A Dizzing Week for Gun Legislation

by Doug McClure
HARDWICK – Wednesday, April 11, started a prolonged series of roller coaster rides, not just for advocates and opponents of gun laws, but for students in Hardwick, as well.

An announcement was made on that day, the entire student body of Hazen had an evacuation drill, walking down North Main Street on mass towards the Memorial Building, shepherded by Police Chief Robert Cochran's cruiser, which was parked at the corner of Church St. and North Main.

Cochran said there was no advance notice of the drill.

"We didn't really warn the kids and people in advance," he said.

Cochran said the drill went to plan. The students were orderly, if a little sheepish, as they returned to class.

Hours later, Governor Phil Scott signed a ceremony on the State House steps to sign two "extreme risk" bills into law. S.55, which bans the purchase of firearms to 21, requires background checks, bans bump stocks, and bans extended magazines. S.221, which is known as the "extreme risk" measure, preventing those deemed by a judge to be a risk to themselves or others from possessing a firearm; and H.422, which allows police to remove firearms from domestic violence situations.

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Scott continued, "If we're at a point where our kids are afraid to go to school, and parents are afraid to put them on a bus, or parents can't step in to prevent a school from taking their own lives, then who are we?"

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Cochran said the drill went to plan. The students were orderly, if a little sheepish, as they returned to class.

Hours later, Governor Phil Scott signed a ceremony on the State House steps to sign two "extreme risk" bills into law. S.55, which bans the purchase of firearms to 21, requires background checks, bans bump stocks, and bans extended magazines. S.221, which is known as the "extreme risk" measure, preventing those deemed by a judge to be a risk to themselves or others from possessing a firearm; and H.422, which allows police to remove firearms from domestic violence situations.

The event, presiding Gov. Scott was flanked by some holdovers thinking the governor for acting and others shouting "No more guns!"

"We said many times throughout my political life, public safety is the top priority of government and responsibility I take seriously as Governor," he said. "I realize only by the grace of God did we avert a horrible outcome today and to the crowd before signing the bills, I would like to thank my 18-year-old Jack Sawyer to go 'Fair Haven shooter."

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