

Fire Station Advisory Vote Goes Up In Flames

by Will Walters

CABOT — The first of what could be a number of votes on the new fire station to be built on the former Gochey property on Route 215 in Lower Cabot failed by a vote of 218 to 185 for a total of 417 ballots cast (four ballots were blank of the 1,106 registered voters. There were 53 absentee ballots received by Monday morning.

Twenty-six were mailed in and 25 were voted in the clerk's office. As of Tuesday morning, a total of 63 absentee ballots were received, while there were 68 ballots mailed or taken out of the clerk's office by the voter.

The vote did not authorize spending any money, other than the amount required for voter approval of the advisory vote. The advisory board to look for various methods of raising funds that could be used for constructing the new station. It was not placed on the

select meeting, warning because, town board chair Mike Hogan said, the warning was already published so it was too late to set a date to vote in March. The town did not have a deadline to purchase the property, owned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, precluded a Town Meeting vote.

Calling the vote on Primary Day, which has a traditionally lower turnout, has been questioned by the public in local conversations, as well as at the informational meeting on Aug. 7. The time limits for some grant applications did not allow for it to be put off to the general election in November and the rapid purchase by the towns accelerated the need for seeking funds. Resident Steve Cox said the timing of the vote is not good; it should be done at town meeting to get enough people know about the vote. Hogan said that the town council

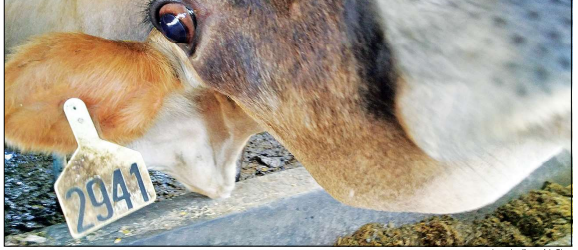
suggested that they do so as soon as possible.

Hogan said the timing might be off on voting in August and maybe there will be a vote again in November and possibly at town meeting, to take into account developing project planning information. He said at a June meeting of the select board he thought the board should get a sense of the town before it moves forward with the project. He said that the taxpayers will vote on any money that the town will have to spend on this project, no matter how much they will need to spend. "Depending on what we get for funding grants, even if there is a \$1 million left for the taxpayers, then it is going to come to the taxpayer to vote on it. We're not just going to pass it, that's going to be for the taxpayers."

George Goley asked if a "no" vote would mean that the town would not be additional voters. He did not receive a clear answer.

At its first meeting, the Fire Station-Amblance working group estimated that the cost of the proposal could be between \$2 million and \$3 million. The working group reported in the minutes of its first meeting "It is expected that, based on funding support of other recently completed stations, estimates are \$2 million to \$3 million in total project costs. The estimates can vary widely, as no definitive construction proposal has been developed. The town wants to find grants and assistance from multiple governmental sources, such as the Community Development and the Buildings Program of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency."

See VOTE, 7



A curious cow investigates the camera at Laggis Brothers Farm in East Hardwick. Like all dairy farms, the Laggis' farm is facing pressure both on milk prices and, more recently, steep tariffs.

Dairy Farmers' Price Woes Made Worse by Trade Tariffs

by Doug McClure

EAST HARDWICK — President Trump's trade wars are having an impact on the Vermont dairy industry. A glut of milk nationwide has depressed dairy prices for the last several years. Now, the tariff war of tariffs between the United States and Canada, Hong Kong, and China is making things

worse. These three trading partners are Vermont's largest destinations for exports, accounting for over half of 2017 total, according to the U.S. Census. (Hong Kong is listed separately in the U.S. Census, though it is a semi-autonomous territory of China.) Mexico, which is Vermont's eight-largest destination for exports, has announced heavy dairy-specific tariffs as well.

The tariffs are exacerbating the downward price pressure. Dairy products previously exported are adding to domestic oversupply. Cabot Creamery Cooperative, a subsidiary of Massachusetts-based Agri-Mark, Agri-Mark Director of Corporate Communication Doug DiMento said the tariffs disproportionately impact dairy exports, because unlike other exports, dairy exports are perishable.

He said the co-op is "very concerned" about the situation and if, at times, the cost will be "hundreds of thousands of dollars," a major importer.

The Trump administration announced \$12 billion in aid to farmers in July. DiMento pointed out that, so far, the tariff total \$35 billion. With three bids on the table, the select board voted to go into executive session to discuss the bids further, with vice chair Dan Kelly raising himself owing to a personal relationship with one bidder.

Chris Laggis and his brother, John, run East Hardwick's Laggis Brothers Farm, which has roughly 500 cows, and Chris was

eager to discuss the situation.

"Experts were going really well until late winter, then all this tariff talk started," he said. "We are very dependent on exports."

In addition to the drop in dairy prices, beef prices have dropped, as well, so the farm is getting hit hard. Laggis said there have been rough spells in the past, especially in 2009, but this time is different. In 2009, he said he could see an end to the problem, but that is not the case now. Despite the worsening crisis, Laggis said it has not affected his and his brother's love for the work.

"We still think it's a good business. We're worried. We're concerned, but we still enjoy the work. This [situation] has to end, and I've got an idea how, but I don't have to believe it will. These things have a way of working themselves out, but right now I'm not seeing a light at the end of the tunnel."

The Laggis Brothers Farm is part of the St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, which has a membership of over 300 farms. Attempts to reach the co-op for comment were unsuccessful.

Dairy farmers are not the only ones impacted by the tariffs.

Businesses that rely on their milk are also affected, though not as directly. Mateo Kehler of Jasper Hill Farm said the tariffs have not affected his operation as some might expect, as the company does export much, but does have a substantial import on costs of materials and equipment.

He said Jasper Hill can not export cheese to Canada, because that country has a protected market. Unlike the U.S., Canadian dairy farms use a complex supply management system, which has kept them insulated from the worldwide oversupply of milk. At a certain quota level, the tariff on milk going to Canada increases to over 200% to prevent oversupply.

Laggis also mentioned supply management and said the U.S. system is too entrenched and large to change, especially as more corporate consolidation happens. In 2016, farmers in Canada were receiving an average price for milk 6% higher than U.S. farmers.

DiMento said the obvious outcome, if nothing changes, will be farms going under. Since 2010, the number of dairy farms in Vermont has fallen 27%. That number has fallen by 10,000 since 1950.



Jim Nevins (left) and Karl Armstrong (right) of Armstrong Meadows of Lyndonville built a 7-foot high by 9-foot wide brick sign Aug. 6 in front of the Vermont Elementary School. The sign, which is electrically operated, says again will be controlled from inside the school.

Hazen Gets \$175k Grant For Career Academy

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), a federal-state partnership with a mission of promoting economic development in the region, awarded Hazen Union a \$175,000 grant, the NBRC announced on Friday August 10.

Hazen's Work-Based Learning Coordinator Jennifer Olson plans to use that money for a multi-year program to develop a career academy at the school.

Assisting in the process will be Sarah Waring of the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE). She will commit time to help the school create the program. The academy follows the State of Vermont's Flexible Pathways initiative, codified by Act 77, in 2013, that seeks to provide students with multiple paths to

graduation, based on their interests and skills.

For the new initiative, the first year will be about planning. Olson said the program should be operational in the second year, and she hopes to have over thirty students in the program by year four.

The academy will work with local businesses and artisans — providing apprenticeship or work-based-learning opportunities to students for course credit. It will complement the existing program that allows juniors and seniors to take college courses for credit. An objective of the academy is to involve the student in the decision as to what path they choose, to make them more proactive about their education, rather than passively following a pre-determined.

See GRANT, 7

As Heat Records Fall, Utilities Feel The Strain

by Doug McClure

BURLINGTON/HARDWICK — The month of July saw a lot of temperature records fall in Vermont and the Northeast Kingdom. July broke a 97-year-old record for warmest average temperature for a month and a 1949 record for highest average temperature in Burlington. It tied a 45-year-old record for longest streak of 80-plus degree days, beat a 1999 record for most 85-plus degree days.

At the 87-year-old maximum temperature record for July at 100 degrees and broke a 1908 record for July at 97.2 degrees.

August is not showing any signs of letting up. Monday broke its record last Monday by 1 degree, with 86 degrees. A non-official Hardwick station reporting 91 degrees. Precipitation was also lacking, with most of July's days in Morrisville reporting less than average rainfall, a

See HEAT, 7



Chickie Warren and Pat Ryan, June, 18 months, of Shelburne (front) and Lyndonville, 2, of Colchester (back) were here on a Shelburne's Old Home Day.

A Closer Look at the Select Board Sand Supplier Decision

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At its July 19 meeting, the select board voted to award a three-year contract for road sand to the vendor that bid the highest price. After questions from a number of residents, including a letter to the editor (see Letters from Readers, page 4), the Gazette decided to request some more details about the discussion and the decision.

The road sand contract was on the agenda for the July 19 select board meeting. There were three bids: \$5.75/cubic yard from Donners, \$5.90/cubic yard from Davis and \$6.85/cubic yard from Gravel.

The meeting included a discussion about several aspects of the contract: the quality of the sand, the length of the

contract and the price.

Town Manager Jon Jewett noted that the results of sieve tests, which evaluate the amount of fine particles in the road sand, are an important metric for determining the quality of the sand.

"What we were concerned about is 200 sieve test, primarily," Jewett said at the meeting. "We want to keep [fine sand] out because it will wash into the ditches."

"The sieve analyses we've gotten this year are a lot cleaner [than last]," Jewett said at the meeting. He added that the samples ranged from 1.9% - 2.3% on the #200 fine sand.

He said that all three bidders used yielded similar sieve test results.

Board Foreman Tom Fadden voiced concern about awarding a

contract for a three-year term, as the quality of sand received this year may not be matched in the subsequent two years. Jewett said he was comfortable with a three-year contract, because the price would be performed by the state inexpensively throughout the duration of the contract.

With three bids on the table, the select board voted to go into executive session to discuss the bids further, with vice chair Dan Kelly raising himself owing to a personal relationship with one bidder.

He said that the decision to move the discussion into executive session, select board Chair John Jewett said, "The select board needed to deliberate about the sand contract."

See SAND, 7



Ben Notermans of Stag Valley Farm won the top 100 tons in the fourth annual Farmers Day Truck on Wheels and on Colchester Aug. 6. Notermans was on The Hippocampus Team.

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In Sports, 10
HODGSON CAPTURES TRIPLE CROWN

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In Towns, 2
TIMBER FRAM: STRUCTURE RAISED AT STERLING

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In Arts, 6
FUNNEY TACKLES SCOTTSVILLE

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