

Vermont Governor gubernatorial Candidates Outline Priorities

Christine Hallquist Plans to Focus on Rural Vermont

by Doug McClure

MORRISTOWN — Christine Hallquist is gearing up for the general election. Statewide, she carried the primary by nearly 38.5 percent according to unofficial numbers; in the towns covered by the Gazette, her total ranged from 45-71%. She spoke with the Gazette about her focus on revitalizing rural Vermont and economic development.

"Let me ask you a question," she said. "Do you want to be having these discussions about fighting over the scraps of food on the table for rest of your life? Or would you rather put someone in place who would grow your wages and provide more jobs? I've got a demonstrated record."

Before her run, Hallquist was CEO of Vermont Electric Co-Op (VEC) for over a decade. Under her leadership, VEC has grown from nearly founding to an A+ rating from Standard & Poor's as it is rural economic development, which includes connecting every home and business with fiber optic cable," she said. "Not only do I do it. I know that's going to reverse the problems of the NEK. What's happening here is reminiscent of the 1930s, where the cities had electricity and rural towns didn't."

"She is referencing the electrification of rural Vermont. It was in the early 20th century that state-regulated utilities also said the electric companies have to do what the state tells them to do. In this case, she will have the utility providing fiber optic service, electrical infrastructure and self broadband providers access to fiber."

"The internet providers don't want to build that infrastructure at all," she said. "They're losing money on it."

"Hallquist can also float three-year loans on infrastructure, unlike internet providers which, she said, answers a question about how such a project could be paid for."

Hallquist said that having the broadband connectivity to the NEK will do more than encourage economic development; it may impact whether younger people decide to stay in or move to rural Vermont."

"Who the hell, what younger person, would move to rural Vermont if they can't get connected to the internet?" she asked. "If you want to bring young people and businesses to rural areas, you've got to have fiber."

Asked about Act 46, Hallquist said it had gone as far as it could go and she is not convinced it was the advertised solution. She felt on the subject of education, and a host of other issues, local control

is needed to achieve good results. "We're looking at about the \$15 hour minimum wage that has been proposed. I'm not sure that's the best solution for the past year and said people are thinking about it to narrow and using unseasoned metrics. One part of her new plan is measuring economic success by how well the bottom 20% is doing financially."

"The working class hasn't received a raise in forty years," she said. "We just adjusted the minimum wage from the late 1960s. It's \$22 an hour right now. Everybody needs to rise up on this one. I tell this to young people because they don't understand they don't need to live this way. Until we get to the point where people have a living wage and we have Medicare for All, we're going to have to subsidize."

"When asked what she would say to a small business owner who couldn't support paying employees that much, Hallquist said "Moving to a living wage and improved Medicare is a question of being a civilized society. We're going to figure it out and we're going to grow businesses. It's not like we're gonna solve this thing overnight, it may be a ten-year path, but people should be hiring others that will have a vision that goes beyond that."

"On the subject of the opioid crisis, Hallquist addressed a CEO's perspective. She said sadly the first approaches have failed."

"We've spent a trillion dollars since Richard Nixon declared war on drugs, and we haven't changed drug use at all. We're incarcerated people, we've broken up families, we've attacked marginalized communities, so that's a failed model."

"When it comes to the controversial issue of the new gun laws, she said "Anything about removing weapons from somebody who is a danger to themselves and others... that's called common sense."

Governor Phil Scott Thinks Outside Chittenden County

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELIER — Governor Phil Scott is seeking a second term as Vermont's Republican Governor. This reporter interviewed Scott at the Pavilion in Montpelier.

The governor discussed what he views as his priorities if re-elected and how he views his tenure as governor so far. Scott had faced a primary challenge, but with his clear victory the election now becomes a referendum on what Scott has accomplished.

"Some of the challenges we've faced two years ago are still here. As well as the guiding principles for my administration have been to grow the economy, make Vermont more affordable and protect the most vulnerable."

"For much of the interview, Scott brought up the 'other thirteen counties' outside of Chittenden County and how based on their areas' economic and other challenges, the effect of Vermont's key problems are magnified."

"He said to find it 'concerning that the state has an aging population and is having trouble attracting younger people. The current trends have led to declining enrollment in schools, a shrinking workforce, and increased healthcare costs."

"We're the second oldest state in terms of residents age. That's why we have to focus on growing the economy and trying to bring more young people into the state. Everything is tied to our population demographics."

"There are jobs available," said Scott. "We just don't have people to fill them right now."

"Scott said that if he is re-elected there won't be a tax increase. "We've heard the screams of fear about how we can do this more effectively, efficiently, providing the quality of education that kids deserve."

"Healthcare is an area where Scott's administration has pioneered a new approach, he said. "We had his focus is on 'all-payer.'"

"Instead of fee-for-service, we would like to see treating the patient holistically more about prevention, instead of charging for every single procedure. We started a pilot project with Medicaid in order to do this. We've had some bad experiences in the not-for-profit part with single-payer, so we need to do something different."

"When asked about the impact of opioids, Scott pointed to the state's opioid crisis treatment model that the state has deployed under his watch. Under this plan, major towns such as St. Johnsbury have extensive treatment options and addiction clinics, such as the Hardwick Area Health Center, have enough for patients who have graduated from treatment."

"He does support the state's needle exchange program but finds the idea of safe injection sites 'counter-intuitive.'"

"While Scott supported marijuana legalization for recreational use, he said his focus is on 'all-payer.'"



Governor Phil Scott photo by Doug McClure

to increase. Wages are coming up with demand. I don't know a single business owner that pays minimum wage."

Scott saluted Act 46 from previous administrations. "I was encouraged to see that they were grappling with the problem. Small schools are important — if they can deliver a high quality education to our kids at a cost that we can afford. We can't lose that."

"We have to accept that we will have to do things differently. It's very difficult to have those conversations, because it's emotional for many. But we have to think about how we can do this more effectively, efficiently, providing the quality of education that kids deserve."

"Healthcare is an area where Scott's administration has pioneered a new approach, he said. "We had his focus is on 'all-payer.'"

"Instead of fee-for-service, we would like to see treating the patient holistically more about prevention, instead of charging for every single procedure. We started a pilot project with Medicaid in order to do this. We've had some bad experiences in the not-for-profit part with single-payer, so we need to do something different."

"When asked about the impact of opioids, Scott pointed to the state's opioid crisis treatment model that the state has deployed under his watch. Under this plan, major towns such as St. Johnsbury have extensive treatment options and addiction clinics, such as the Hardwick Area Health Center, have enough for patients who have graduated from treatment."

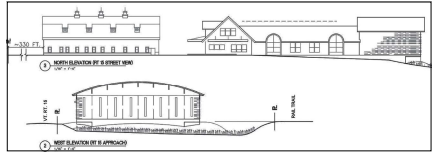
"He does support the state's needle exchange program but finds the idea of safe injection sites 'counter-intuitive.'"

"While Scott supported marijuana legalization for recreational use, he said his focus is on 'all-payer.'"

"When asked about the impact of opioids, Scott pointed to the state's opioid crisis treatment model that the state has deployed under his watch. Under this plan, major towns such as St. Johnsbury have extensive treatment options and addiction clinics, such as the Hardwick Area Health Center, have enough for patients who have graduated from treatment."

"He does support the state's needle exchange program but finds the idea of safe injection sites 'counter-intuitive.'"

"While Scott supported marijuana legalization for recreational use, he said his focus is on 'all-payer.'"



The proposal for the yellow barn, as presented at the hearing on August 23. courtesy Coe Architects

No One Shows Up for Yellow Barn Hearing

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — A warned hearing on the Yellow Barn project did not attract a single attendee. Only three of five select board members and a representative of the Northern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) showed up for the meeting.

The financing of the project is complicated, but the consequences are significant. Hardwick just voted to apply for a \$1 million grant. Town Manager Jon Jewett drew a simple diagram of where the money would come.

"Primarily what we're trying to do is take a piece of property that has a bit of historic value to this town but also by its nature as a huge barn is like a gateway to this town and a gateway to the agricultural economy that we are all benefiting from. We want to maintain that barn and preserve it, but we also want to take some compatible uses from that barn and build the economy in Hardwick by either growing businesses in town or creating new businesses and helping business."



Hardwick Town Manager Jon Jewett explores the funding mechanisms and sources for the Yellow Barn Project at a public hearing on August 23.

to find a place to stay in town. Caledonia Spirits is a four-and-a-half million dollar company that is leaving the town of Hardwick because they couldn't find a place that was cost-effective and a good location that would allow them to grow and develop. They left, they're going to Montpelier. Montpelier's investing over a million dollars to get Caledonia Spirits and keep them there. A group we've looked at this yellow barn and said this is a great opportunity to make use of this."

See HEARING, 7

Hazen Welcomes Incoming 7th and 9th Graders

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — For the second successive year, Hazen held an open house for its incoming 7th and 9th grade classes with a principal and teachers on hand to greet them.

New principal David Perrigo, former of Sizer School in South Schuettsmass, was on hand to greet them.

"The bogie boys were still stuffed into the back of the car that they arrived and it was all of twenty minutes before those youngsters and the teachers were talking to band teacher C. O'Neil."

"The principal was interested in Spanish and his younger brother spoke Spanish and he spoke a language. It is a pain."

Freely responded by saying it was a five year process. See INCOMING, 7

Wolcott Select Board Tackles Untruss-worthy Bridge

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT — At a special August 22 select board meeting, the Wolcott Select Board voted to replace the untruss-worthy bridge on Highway 15 over the village of Flat Iron Road path into the village.

Funding could either be completely through town resources, in cooperation with the state, or in cooperation with both the state and federal sources, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). VTrans detailed the options.

"VTrans' Stu Cota said the first priority must be "protecting the public. Not all the required signs on Highway 15 are up. The concern is a motorist might steer off of the highway at speed and slam into the concrete barriers along the existing bridge."

Board member Kimberly Gray said, and the other board mem-

In Sports, 10

WILDCATS READY TO PROGRESS

TEST DRILLING AT WOODBURY

In Towns, 2

WOLCOTT — At a special August 22 select board meeting, the Wolcott Select Board voted to replace the untruss-worthy bridge on Highway 15 over the village of Flat Iron Road path into the village.

Funding could either be completely through town resources, in cooperation with the state, or in cooperation with both the state and federal sources, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). VTrans detailed the options.

See BRIDGE, 7

In Arts, 6

WOLCOTT — At a special August 22 select board meeting, the Wolcott Select Board voted to replace the untruss-worthy bridge on Highway 15 over the village of Flat Iron Road path into the village.

Funding could either be completely through town resources, in cooperation with the state, or in cooperation with both the state and federal sources, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). VTrans detailed the options.

See BRIDGE, 7

BRIDGE CLOSED

WOLCOTT — At a special August 22 select board meeting, the Wolcott Select Board voted to replace the untruss-worthy bridge on Highway 15 over the village of Flat Iron Road path into the village.

Funding could either be completely through town resources, in cooperation with the state, or in cooperation with both the state and federal sources, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). VTrans detailed the options.

See BRIDGE, 7