

PUC Investigates Consolidated Communications

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELLIER — The Vermont Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has launched a formal investigation into the “service quality standards for retail customers of telecommunications services” provided by Consolidated Communications, the owner of the former FairPoint Communications.

Commission documents state that the “investigation will also determine whether penalties should be imposed for any non-compliance with those requirements.”

As a first step, public hearings will be held on November 26 and December 4, after which motions, discovery, and testimony will take place. The initial round of investigation is scheduled to

last until at least March 2019, according to the PUC.

Katy Purvis, Director of the Vermont Public Service’s telecommunications department, which petitioned the PUC for the investigation, said “The PUC has accepted our petition and has opened an investigation into Consolidated Communications for quality.” As a part of the investigation, Purvis said, an expert will be hired to assess the situation and make recommendations for remediation. He said the investigation centers around “landline services, as that is in the PUC’s jurisdiction, but since the landline side of residential service for Consolidated Communications relies on the exact same network, online services are also likely affected.

The new investigation is an echo of investigation is scheduled to

See PUC 2.



Emily Babour (left), UVM Food Systems Master student; Paul Sweeney (center), Steering Chair; and Vanessa Fournier (right) help to top 172 purvises from into pizza boxes to be included in Thanksgiving food boxes which go to the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, the Woodbury/Cabot Food Shelf and area community centers. (By Doug McClure) Celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. It is sponsored by the Center for an Agricultural Economy, the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, Sterling College and the Community Food Action Club.

Legal Challenge to Act 46 Mandates Looms

by Doug McClure

MONTEPELLIER — The Board of Education is required to issue its final decision on school district consolidation on or before November 30. If, as expected, the board calls for fewer mergers with which parents and school boards disagree, it is highly likely that the Act 46 process will be extended by legal challenges.

Greensboro attorney David Kelley is one of a group of lawyers that have been helping school boards prepare for legal action on behalf of over two dozen schools at this point.

By statute, school boards can make a legal appeal against any of the mandates issued by the Board of Education report up to thirty days after the Board’s final report is formally released.

Kelley said he expects that if the decision is made to move forward with the appeal, it would likely be in the two or three weeks after the Board’s final report is issued.

Next year’s Town Meeting Day is on March 5. If the Board of Education releases its recommendations on November 28 as expected, there will be 97 days before

Town Meeting, excluding public holidays and weekends. Schools boards and supervisory unions are required to present budgets to voters on Town Meeting Day, even though the structure of school districts may not be known until an appeal is decided. One school administrator sarcastically referred to the timeline as “challenging.”

Kelley said “what we have is a knee-thrusting move down the tracks pretty fast and at some point that knee-thrusting gets so far down the track, you can’t bring it back when you have property that’s being transferred and we have debt being transferred.”

For example, East Montpelier has millions of dollars worth of debt that’s going to be transferred to the other towns if they don’t vote without a vote or anything else. You have all of these consequences getting triggered by the November 28 decision. And the more time that goes by and the deeper we get into the new budget, the harder it is to bring the train back. I’ve never seen a law that was this poorly poorly crafted.

Kelley said many of the towns in the Northern Kingdom do not

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Perchlik Jumps From Select Board To Senate

by Will Walters

MONTEPELLIER — Former Marshfield resident and select board chair Andrew Perchlik is the newest senator representing Washington County, but says of his election “I really do not feel like, or consider, that I won anything. To me, it is important to distinguish between being elected and winning. I feel like I was elected and the credit for that action should be given to the voters.”

He said he was a candidate and campaigned but that there are no winners or losers since he does not see it as a race. He said “those that engaged honorably in the process but were not elected should be held up as civic winners and not labeled as losers.”

Perchlik now resides in Montpelier after moving from Marshfield, where he was chair of the select board for two years, a justice of the peace, and served on the town energy committee, giving him some public office experience before becoming a candidate for the state senate. He also served on the board of the Vermont Community Loan Fund, a non-profit, public benefit organization.

He works as public manager of

the Clean Energy Development Fund at the Public Service Department (PSD), where he is going on nine years of employment. He was also a limited service employee at the public service department from 1998 to 2001. He said “I do plan to keep my job with the State during my time of service in the General Assembly. I’ve worked at the PSD during the session (for 8-12 hours or so) and how that would work for me is still something I need to officially settle with the PSD Commission.” He feels his employment with the state will make him a better legislator “as I have experienced from the inside how state government and the legislature interact and have that experience of a state worker.”

“I wanted to work with and for the citizens of all of Washington County on building a collective prosperity,” Perchlik gave as his reason for running. He enjoyed

his time on the Marshfield select board and wanted to find other ways to serve when he and his family moved to Montpelier. He said he was encouraged to run for the state senate and though he would have to run a few times to win a seat, but he said when Sen. Francis Brocks decided not to run, it improved his chances for his own campaign support in the primary and general elections.

On Act 46, he is against federal control. “I support the towns of Galois and Westmoreland and their forced merger and those in Cabot that want to keep control of their schools. I believe Vermonters are smart enough to know when their own schools for the benefit of their own children, that is not a decision that should be made in Montpelier.”

He supports universal health care “but I don’t think we should

See PERCHLIK, 5



The Buffalo Mountain Co-Op during a recent autumn event. The Co-Op is making some changes to adapt to consumer demands and improve its financial results.

Changes Coming to Buffalo Mountain Co-op

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — It’s been over forty years since the Buffalo Mountain Co-Op opened its doors in November, 1975, and changes in the grocery and food industry have caused the Co-Op to step back and evaluate things it could be doing better and more efficiently.

Over the summer, Operations Manager Joanna Gordon said, “Efficiency Vermont did a blow test to evaluate improvements for the circa-1980 building and recommended insulation upgrades in the attic, the alley, and the basement. Grocery manager Beth Cate said that with the exception of re-amping the basement,

See CO-OP, 7



Three hundred White Holland turkeys ranging from 15 to 35 lbs. appear to be having a meeting at the Grassfield Farm in Cabot.

Conservation Commission Proposed to Board

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — At the November 15 select board meeting, Hardwick town officials and the select board re-iterated the winter operations plan and reminded residents of the parking ban. The board also heard from Judy Bellairs and Rachel Kane about a proposal to create a conservation commission, get an update on the replacement roof for the Bridgman Hill Reservoir, and get the first look at the proposed PY 20 budget.

Town Manager Jon Jewett had a lot to say about the Hardwick winter operations plan, which has changed, but noted that residents can take action to make things easier for everyone. “One thing we want is get your winter tires on right away, Jewett said. “I was following someone given me an hour on the other day and the other thirty people behind me weren’t happy either.”

The town’s road crew plans to leave their berths at three in the morning and focus first on the school routes, with the objective being to have those routes cleared by six a.m. Jewett said the town has received calls about people complaining that plows weren’t

coming down their streets often enough, and he said that is a combination of perception and the reality that the drivers are covering a lot of terrain at very low speeds by necessity in trucks that are not highly maneuverable.

Board member Elizabeth Dow wanted to express her thanks for the work the road crew does. “The Town of Hardwick has six road crew and they are tasked with plowing, sanding and salting six-and-a-half miles of roads and sidewalks. It is not a trivial task and it starts at three in the morning. It’s not a job I would want, and I’m grateful that they do it,” she said, and other board members echoed her gratitude.

Jewett reminded everyone about the winter parking ban, which started on November 15. “It’s not a job I would want, and I’m grateful that they do it,” she said, and other board members echoed her gratitude.

Judy Bellairs and Rachel Kane came before the board with a proposal to create a Hardwick

See COMMISSION, 4



Mark and Hope McAndrew volunteered at the 2018 Invictus Games, held October 20-27, in Sydney, Australia. The East Hardwick couple provided support for the Concept 2 rowing machine used at the indoor rowing venue. The international competition provides volunteer, injured or sick military veterans from around the world with the opportunity to compete in 17 multiple adaptive athletic events.

The McAndrews Go Down Under to Support Veterans

by Jim Flint

EAST HARDWICK — For the past twenty years, Mark McAndrew has specialized in creating adaptive equipment to assist para rowers in training and competition. His work for Concept 2 involved designing mechanical adaptations for outdoor rowing boats and indoor rowing ergometers. After 28 years at the Morrisville-based company, he retired in 2017 with a continuing passion to help people of all abilities keep healthy and active.

McAndrew brought his experience to the 2018 Invictus Games, held October 20-27, in Sydney, Australia. He helped to coordi-

nate the technical support team for the indoor rowing competition. His wife Hope McAndrew served as a first-line volunteer. The experience was life-changing for Mark. The international competition provides volunteer, injured or sick military veterans from around the world with the opportunity to compete in 17 multiple adaptive athletic events.

The Invictus Games started in 2014 in London. The brainchild of Prince Harry of Sussex, the international competition includes equestrian, track and field, powerlifting, swimming, rowing, sailing, shooting, volleyball, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, and land speed driving. The second day even featured a

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 WINTER OPENED
 WITH A BANG

In Towns, 2
 GOOD SHOWING AT
 WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE

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