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Road Crew Resignations Force Reckoning

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT — Nearly two dozen concerned residents showed up to the Wolcott Select Board meeting on October 16 following the unexpected resignations of town road crew members Skip Peters and Bernard Earle.

The employees' departures, effective within the next week, leaves the town with an interim road crew committee and no road crew at the time of press. Residents also restored to the Lamouille Sheriff Department's report.

When asked why Peters had resigned, Select Board Chair Paul Farnsworth responded, "I don't know." Farnsworth said he received "a two-sentence email from the town in which he was terminated. Others in attendance were less guarded.

"Does anyone know why Skip quit?" said one resident. "Skip was talking for a while about retiring, and then he quit without telling us to tell us what to do." You don't abuse somebody like that if you don't have backs,"

"Somebody should have talked to him," said another.

"It is hard to have employees and not have them leave," another resident said. "The person didn't want to do their job." Calling it a "force of nature's reckoning," Farnsworth said Peters just got his third raise in two years. We thought we were getting a good fit and what he asked, Skip wanted to resign and this is the position we're in."

"If we have a major snowstorm ... is our sand and salt pile all built up and a resident asked, 'No.' End of salt,"

Earle said the sand has been supplied, but VTrans District 8 has yet to supply the salt, leaving the salt. "We have enough [salt] for half a snowstorm," Earle said.

As residents voiced concern about having little time to prepare for winter, Select Board Chairman Tom Catores asked everyone to focus on "what" and not "who" in the situation. "This town has a big problem right now and we need to focus to go away by talking about 'who.' Whether we like someone or not, at least we can get the work done," he said. "Without focusing on what instead of who're we're a dead town walking."

Fire Department Clears Permit for New Station

by Will Walters

CALAIS — The Woodbury Fire Department has obtained a permit from the Development Review Board (DRB) to build a new fire station. The project has been delayed in the department's plan to begin construction next summer. The department signed a five-year contract with the town of Calais for fire protection.

At its recent select board meeting, chair Diane Wheeler and the DRB permit is required to allow a waiver of septic cottage at the site. The department plans to build a detached garage of land in the village to the rear of the building on Route 14. An existing house on the lot will be torn down to make way for the garage. In addition to setbacks, the DRB permit includes a new removal plan for trees along Route 14 and storm runoff onto Route 14.

A detailed drawing of the station is expected to be available in the near future. The next meeting on the fire station

Gavel said there are two people potentially interested in the road foreman position, and added that he would interview them. The road foreman is still reeling from the surprise resignations, but that he should remain interested in the position. One resident expressed concern that the two people who applied would be qualified for the role. Gavel assured her that he had held similar positions previously.

Catores suggested that issues with the town's road crew and maintenance should be addressed in the interim period before new staff is hired. The board largely agreed. "I would take this opportunity to reiterate the leadership of the Select Board," Gavel said. "I have heard of give Platinum insurance to a road crew." Board member Mike Sullivan added, "I think this point, \$19,200 a year for two people and the town pays one hundred percent."

From messages of advertising new crew positions had failed to yield results. The board agreed that it needs to seek to expand advertising to include other locations.

The top of the agenda was the state's annual law enforcement, at an estimated price tag of \$225,000, was approved. The board also received eleven calls and issued three tickets in September, with the most recent call for a "directed patrol" an officer is obligated to respond to. "In the past sixty days I have not seen one [LSRO] patrol car in the village," one resident said.

Another resident stated that due to the lack of patrols, he and his wife began trying to keep out of my driveway is kind of dangerous," Dannerding said.

Outstanding said that in "200-plus trips through this village eight hours a day I haven't seen any patrols. The town will open drug stores in public parking lots on Route 15 were called in 'all the time' but LCSD ignored the calls," he said. And he would "follow up with Sheriff Marquis" immediately.



Abigail Ackerman (left) uses a hand held harvester to harvest hemp plants as Jennifer Czaplickas (center) and Jen Greaves (right) help load the hemp onto a trailer last week at The Mountain Hemp Farm in Cabot. The 24,000 hemp plants are being harvested by Abigail Ackerman of Hardwick. The hemp was planted on 24 acres of Abigail's family land in Cabot. A crew of 21 people harvested the hemp contracted to Vermont CBD Labs in Winooski, who will extract CBD content to produce the isolate.

Cabot Pie Festival Faces Uncertain Future

by Michael Bielawski

CABOT — The 20th Annual Cabot Apple Pie Festival took place this past Saturday along with 47 vendors and dozens of pies to eat. The event is put on by the Cabot Historical Society (CHS).

Histories Society President Barbara Dannenberg, who organized the event, said CHS needs support from the community to continue the tradition in two locations: a building on Main Street and a one-room schoolhouse near West Hill pond.

Outstanding attendees said that in "200-plus trips through this village eight hours a day I haven't seen any patrols. The town will open drug stores in public parking lots on Route 15 were called in 'all the time' but LCSD ignored the calls," he said. And he would "follow up with Sheriff Marquis" immediately.

"The pies were a success, people loved the pies and that's what's it's about," she said. The winners of the competition were: Best Overall, Tessie Bussell; Tessie is Mere, Beth Wade, and Grace Hoffman. For the children's competition, winners were Ty Perkins, Jayden Whitehouse, Freya



Historical Society president Bonnie Danneberg stands in front of the 20th Annual Cabot Apple Pie Festival on Saturday afternoon.

Van Deeser, and Jonah Cook. "It's a nice competition, and a friendly competition," Ogilvie added. "I was really excited about it, the kids especially."

Judges included Rep. Kitty Till, D-Danvers, and the department of Natural Resources.

Vendor Chuck Talbert, of Talbert Farm in Cabot, has participated in the festival since the beginning, he said. Talbert specializes in maple products.

"The maple business has been growing, they have probably twice as many members as when they first started out," Talbert said.

He said he makes syrup is done well.

"We do more wholesale accounts with three supermarkets and a couple of restaurants and a distributor," Talbert said. "I am making half my income now."

Vendor Melanie Miller of Melinda's Maple Syrup, which she inherited from her late father, who entered the working business during World War II.

"He taught me how to weave and how to build, so I build the footstools and benches and make the barrels," she said. "I have a good clientele of customers and I'm teaching my children how to do it," she said.

Seth O'Brien, of Walden, displayed drag photography, including photos of iconic spots such as Nichols Pond.

See PICTURE, 3



Past and present owners of the Yellow Barn property met October 22 for a ceremonial exchange of keys to reflect the town. Shauna Fader (owner) and Eric Morris (board director) and Andrew Maynard (representative) from Vt. wine Stephen Fader, Brooks Knobell and Tim Hobbs are the former owners.

Solar Project Coming to Old Gravel Pit

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — A solar project has been in development for several years has now entered the permitting stage.

Proposed for the 11 towns it will serve, the Hardwick Electric Department (HED) solar farm will sit atop the old Billings Road, will produce up to 1,65 megawatts of electricity.

The project will now use "net metering," a set of rules that regulate how individuals can connect to the power system. Hardwick Electric Manager Mike Sullivan has been working on the net metering process.

"Our HED is not a net metering utility," Sullivan said.

Not everyone agrees that net metering is in the best interests of HED's customers," Sullivan wrote in an email to the Gazette. "It will contribute to the instability of the power for our customers, as the power it will produce will be sent back to the grid at a rate which is 50 percent less than meter net-metered projects."

Sullivan said the proposed projects are "heavily subsidized" through state and federal programs. "The subsidies are paid by working Vermonters through their income tax. The power produced is subsidized to be shipped up to retail energy values, which is almost double its worth to Vermont utility companies," Sullivan said.

"What it ultimately boils down to is a cost shift — and not metering is not a cost shift for our ratepayers," Sullivan wrote.

Amesbury Tapet, director of operations for a Clean Energy investment, said Sullivan's assessment of the net metering costs is consistent with what she's hearing.

across the state.

"This is what is being complained about, that not only is the cost of energy is paying is outrageously high compared to what they can do themselves," she said.

According to last year, Washington Electric Co-Op (WEC) manager Patty Richards said the company's goal is to generate a kilowatt-hour for net-metered power; more than double the cost of power anticipated from HED's HED.

Sullivan said Vermonters should be supporting Vermont utility investments in solar power, rather than more costly net-metered projects.

"Unless you're energy storage equipment are part of a solar project, then the project is not a solar project," he said.

Not everyone agrees that net metering is in the best interests of ratepayers.

"It is better for the ratepayers," Sullivan said.

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Testing Detects No PFOAs in Hardwick Water

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — The Hardwick Select Board received progress reports on the Bridgman Hill Research and a status update on the water quality test results at its scheduled meeting on October 17. Business Manager Carter Danielson, of the town, said the testing looked spending compared to budget, and AT&T had a request for the board.

Town Manager Shaun Fielder

reported that water testing for PFOAs (perfluorooctanoic acids), polyfluorinated industrial surfactants, which have been linked to cancer, was completed and "the important thing for the town to know is that the test result for those 18 chemicals — every one of them — was 'no detect,'" Fielder said the town would be looking for a third party to conduct a follow-up test.

With winter fast approaching See TESTING, 2



The Granite Trust Bank building on Mill Street, which has been vacant for years, has a new owner. The transaction was reportedly an off-deal deal for \$10,000 to unclaimed buyers from Stowe.

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LADY CHARGERS TOPPLE TWINFIELD/CABOT



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MONTPELIER STUDENTS GLEAN CABOT FIELD



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CLOW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

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