

THE Hardwick Gazette

INDEPENDENT LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1889

Hardwick • Cabot • Calais • Craftsbury • Greensboro • Marshfield • Plainfield • Stannard • Walden • Wolcott • Woodbury

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

Volume 131 Number 24

BLM Protest on the Common Draws Hundreds

by Doug McClure

CRAFTSBURY COMMON – Hundreds gathered on the Common last Wednesday, June 10, to protest the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. The protest began with the entire crowd walking around the Common twice, followed by eight minutes and forty-six seconds of silence to mark the time Floyd was pinned by the policeman before he died. Some protesters knelt, some bowed their heads, others staged a “die-in,” lying on the turf face-down. An unplanned, unscripted round of impromptu speeches from those in the crowd took place from the gazebo, with people lining up to give testimony of their thoughts on racism and police brutality.

Anthony Marques, who is black, observed, “I didn’t know what to expect when I came to Craftsbury. I expected it to be really white, I’m not going to lie. There’s one, two, maybe three black people here, including that horse.”

He said growing up in Vermont “I’ve seen everything, from the cops treating me unfairly, to being treated unfairly in school, to just walking down the street and have somebody call me a nigger. That’s something that happens almost every single day, in the town that



photo by Doug McClure

At the start of the Craftsbury Black Lives Matter protest, protesters walked around the Common twice.

you live in, the community you guys live in.” Marques challenged this crowd to “join me, join my brothers, talk to us, treat us like human beings.”

Another speaker, Terrence Coley, said it went beyond racism in the case of George Floyd and dozens of other black and brown

people who had died at the hands of police. “It’s the cops. They need to be accountable for their actions, period. It’s the bottom line. It’s not a black and white thing, it’s people abusing their authority.”

One woman spoke about how an adoption agency had characterized potential kids to her.

“There’s the white girls, they’re okay, there’s the white boys, they’re better. Then there’s the Asians. And then there’s the black girls and black boys. They’re at the bottom of the pile. That’s from an adoption agency. That’s how we treat our children.”

See PROTEST, 2

Small Counter-protest Held in Craftsbury



photo by Doug McClure

At last Wednesday’s Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest in Craftsbury, a counter-protest led to confrontations between BLM demonstrators and several men in a pickup flying the Confederate battle flag and the Gadsden (Don’t Tread on Me) flag.

by Doug McClure

CRAFTSBURY – While the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest on Craftsbury Common last Thursday was peaceful, three counter-protesters disrupted the proceedings twice. Eyewitness accounts and photos show that at least one or two of the three counter-protesters carried a firearm.

As the BLM protest began, a panel van draped in white sheets decorated with offensive words parked at the north end of the common. Two males, later identified as Jesse Wright of Craftsbury and Chase Lafae of Wolcott, exited the vehicle. A few BLM protesters approached the pair to discourage them. Eyewitnesses say Wright tucked a firearm he had tucked into his waistband. The BLM protesters tore the sheet off the

truck, and the teenagers drove off.

About an hour later, the two returned in a pickup truck driven by Jasper Wright, Jesse’s father. Eyewitness accounts of events are consistent, but several did not want their names used out of fear of retaliation. Both teenagers had changed clothes and Lafae wore a “Trump 2020” T-shirt. Jesse Wright held a Confederate Battle Flag in one hand and his phone in another. Lafae held a Gadsden Flag (“Don’t Tread on Me”) in his left hand and his phone in his right.

More protesters approached the vehicle. The protesters stood in front of the van and witnesses say Jasper Wright did not stop his vehicle, but continued driving and bumped into the protesters. With multiple protesters suddenly

See COUNTER-PROTEST, 2