

Local Education Leaders Ponder Next School Year

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK – Vermont's Secretary of Education, Dan French, has indicated that he does not envision social distancing measures being discontinued any time soon. Local education leaders have shared what kind of expectations that staff and students may face if schools resume operations on campus next fall.

Orleans Southwest Superior Union Elementary District Adam Rosenberg said that social distancing measures may be required in the classroom, especially for elementary schools. "We're waiting on guidance from the state regarding how to effectively implement social distancing at all grade levels," he wrote in an email.

"We've been told that the measures our state has put into place, including school closures, has reduced the number of cases and deaths that would have occurred without them," he wrote. He estimated that any number of deaths – currently 54 in Vermont – is not acceptable.

Katharine Ingram, chair of the Orleans Southwest Elementary School Board, said she has not received any specific directions from the state on what may be changing next school year. She did say if there are new requirements, they would come with new challenges.

"Let's say that we have masks in schools. How much instructional time is going to be spent talking to children about wearing their masks and reminding them to keep their hands off their faces?" she asked. "Teachers spend a lot of time on behavioral instruction, so if all of a sudden our social work has

changed, that's going to mean there's going to be a lot of time spent on this new program of social interaction."

She added that it could be challenging for children to interpret a teacher's voice without seeing their facial expressions.

"I think that when we get actual directions from the state, that's when the committee is going to start talking about what we can actually do," she said. "What is possible for us to do? And there's the question of how do we support all the children with different needs."

She said if the classroom regulations are too onerous, some parents have already expressed concerns and at least one said that if masks are required for children then the family will pull their students out of school.

Gordon Young, the chair for the Wolcott Elementary School Board, said he expects schools will be open, but with restrictions.

"The administration will be trying to figure out ways to try to have increased distancing in classrooms and have some kind of combination remote and in-person (options)," he said. "Basically to continue to develop our processes for having remote instruction. It's too early to tell what that will look like and how we will make it work."

He said it's good that safe policies were taken so far but saw that there is more news about the coronavirus, changes should be applied.

"I think we geared up for a worst-case scenario and I think that was the right thing to do," he said. "So now we will see what it's certainly time to reevaluate what we are doing."



One of two excavators works to remove flammable material that might further fuel a fire at All Metals Recycling on Friday. (photo by Doug McClure)

Multiple Towns Respond to Fire at All Metals Recycling

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – A fire and apparent explosion occurred at All Metals Recycling on Friday. Hardwick Fire, Police, and EMS were first on scene, but firefighters from Walden, Wolcott and Woodbury also responded.

The Walden Fire Department posted that a "wreck metal pile containing magnesium, aluminum, grease, oil and gasoline plus one scrap vehicle was involved."

Workers at the scene were using two excavators as the fire raged. A car lay on its side, gas tank still flaming. Some firefighters attempted to control the main fire, while others sprayed the car down. There were no reported injuries.

This marks at least the second fire at All Metals Recycling facility in 2020. A fire occurred at the Williston facility in February.



Members of the Hardwick American Legion Post 7 from left to right: Todd Manchester, Chaplain; Wilfred McAllister, Commander; Bradley Stavon, 1st Vice Commander; Lou Furry, Service Officer; Merrick Poirer, Adjutant; and Gray Smith, Member at Large salute during a ceremony held at Memorial Park. (photo by Vanessa Fournier)

OSUED Combines Woodbury, Lakeview Principal Position

by Emmett Aeary

HARDWICK – The board of the Orleans Southwest Union Elementary District (OSUED) met May 27. Unified sports programming, school configurations and the Woodbury principal search were on the agenda.

Heather Freeman, the Orleans Southwest Supervisor's OSUED director, said she and staff members gave an update to the board on the Woodbury principal search and the OSUED committee believes it is best to have a full-time principal at Woodbury, the committee did not believe there is an appropriate applicant for the interim principal position.

Board member Orise Anisworth asked OSSU Superintendent Adam Rosenberg whether he continued to stand behind his recommendation that the principal position be combined for Woodbury and Lakeview for the coming year. Rosenberg said that he stood by the recommendation. After some discussion, Anisworth made a motion to accept Rosenberg's recommendation to combine the principal position for the 2020-2021 school year. The board passed the motion with three in favor, one against and one abstention.

Current Lakeview Principal Justine Guthrie will take over the dual role. The board discussed whether to table further action on the district reconfiguration discussion. Board chair Katharine Ingram asked Rosenberg whether he could provide any information on what the coming school years are likely to look like. He said that the schools will be keeping units of students together to forestall transmission within each school and make contact tracing easier, as well as looking into models for distancing in classrooms. The models include potentially using a hybrid of online and in-person teaching, perhaps rotating from one to the other through the day or week by week. The board discussed whether to table further action on the district reconfiguration discussion due to the current uncertainty surrounding the next school year. Anisworth made a motion to table the discussion until at least January, to better focus on the immediate needs caused by the pandemic. Her motion was seconded by board member Phoebe Starr. Board member Larissa Arzuff spoke in favor of putting off the proposal temporarily, but not losing sight of the work entirely. The board discussed using summer retreat time to focus on the project. Anisworth's motion was voted down, and the board decided to move forward on the project, perhaps at a retreat over the summer.



Morgan Michaud (left), 12, and his cousin Hallee Michaud (center), 8, of Kingdom Creamery of Vermont deliver dairy products from their farm to Sharon Ferland (right) every Thursday. Three days a week Claire Michaud delivers throughout Lamoille, Caledonia, Orleans and Washington counties. The home delivery routes and outside pick-up at Kingdom Creamery in East Hardwick are in March. (photo by Vanessa Fournier)

Animal Control Officer Threatened

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT – At the special select board meeting of May 27, the Wolcott Select Board learned that Miles Sheald, animal control officer, had resigned due to threats.

Kimberly Gravel had been the phone calls and described them as threatening Sheald's "home, his family... his well-being, to his house."

Sheald said the person threatening him drives by his home "at two in the morning, revving motors, screaming outside the window. I've got small kids, so I've just got to watch the safety of my kids." Sheald said select board member Michael Davidson, a recording of his last phone call, which Davidson said was "a last conversation."

That individual has also left threatening phone calls with Town Clerk Belinda Clegg. She contacted the Lamoille County Sheriff's Department (LCSO) over the calls. David-

son has provided documentation to the LCSO, as well. Kimberley Gravel said it was an "eye-opener" of the "danger we're putting people in when we ask them to do this job."

Kimberly Gravel said "I'm sorry for the experience you've had in the last few days." Lamoille County Sheriff's Office is investigating because other properties owners also feel threatened and terrified, according to Clegg.

Hardwick's Animal Control Officer, Dean Merrier, has offered to come into town to help. The board thought it might be a good idea to have a one-resident doing the ridge work for the sake of safety. Merrier will be invited to the June 3 meeting for an interview. The select board also adjusted procedures to avoid long virtual meetings. Except for special permission from Chair Kimberley Gravel, the consensus committee's restrictions to ten minutes in a specific

time window at the meeting's end. Resident Bill Cotten shared his opinion with a "bear, bear" after promising to adhere to that policy. The board also heard that the North Wolcott Road damage caused by the Halloween Storm in 2010 would be repaired. The road will be closed for two weeks beginning on June 9. Residents can sue alternative routes. Jim Paradise owns a construction and trucking company and will use his equipment to deal with the wash-out on Brook Road on June 8. He told the board he will rip up the slope from the ridge where the washout happened and put two-foot stone there to prevent further washouts that may affect the bridge. Adam Allen, owner of Kingdom Timber Forestry and Logging, used his company's equipment on a second wash-out segment on Town Hill last week.



Hardswick Elementary teachers and staff made signs thanking families for everything they have done to meet the many challenges related to the Coronavirus pandemic. (photo by Vanessa Fournier)