The Times Ink!
OF RICHMOND & HUNTINGTON

The Newspaper of Richmond & Huntington

Volume 41 **May 2024 Issue** Number 4

April 8, 2024.

Photo of total solar eclipse: Jared Katz

School Budget Passes Handily

The voters of the five member towns of the Mt. Mansfield Unified Union School District (MMUUSD) went to the polls on April 2 to vote on the proposed budget. The vote, which had been scheduled for Town Meeting Day March 5, was delayed due to legislation in Montpelier. (See previous issue of the TIMES INK for some details.)

The budget passed 1849-1385.

All ballots were taken to Richmond after the polls closed by two Board of Civil Authority members from each town in the locked box and "commingled" with the other member towns of the school district, in order to not know how each town voted. This is intentional.

While the total number of voters in the five towns is not known, individual towns, on average, reported 20% to 25% voter turnout.

The cost of the special elections throughout the State of Vermont (most are being held in April) will be reimbursed to the individual towns.

Surprise Opening Night Actor at MMU Play

Members of the cast, crew and band of LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, MMU's spring musical production, pose with guest special actor Governor Phil Scott, before the opening night show. Scott appeared onstage for the production as the reluctant dental patient. He said this is his first acting role (campaign speeches and press conferences don't count). See more on page 15. Photo: Andrew McClellan

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Write to Us!

Letters on local topics are encouraged. Please submit to news@timesinkvt.org . All submissions must have a signature and phone number for verification. Letters with an inflammatory tone, or prose likely to incite high blood pressure in some of the readers, will be reviewed and evaluated by The Times Ink! Board of Directors before printing.

The Times Ink! OF RICHMOND & HUNTINGTON

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news@timesinkvt.org

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Issue: May 22

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Letters Opinions & Other News

Public Safety Forum

The community is invited to meet and ask questions of representatives from the Community Justice Center, Howard Mental Health Community Outreach and our Chief of Police, Anthony Cambridge. The event will be on Wednesday, June 5, at 7 pm, at the Richmond Congregational Church. A remote attendance option will be available. Come and learn how their work keeps people out of the criminal justice system and increases public care and safety. Do you have questions about the alternative justice approach? Do you wonder about mental health support in our community? How do police interface with these agencies? Please bring your questions or, if you prefer, send them to Connie van Eeghen at RichmondCove@comcast.net ahead of time. This event is sponsored by Richmond Racial Equity and will be posted on our website, as well as a link on social media, as we get closer to the event. Save the Date! https://richmondracialequity.org

—*Bonny Steuer*, Richmond Racial Equity

Early Mud Season Conditions on Vermont Trails

Despite a major snowstorm in late March and one in the forecast for late April, mud season conditions are here in our mountains and trails. The Green Mountain Club cautions hikers that high-elevation trails on state land are now closed through May. Specific closures are listed on Trail Finder and include trails to Camels Hump, Mount Mansfield, and Jay Peak.

The start of mud season for the trails has historically been April 15, but it's been trending earlier in recent years. This year, with such a mild winter, we saw mud season equivalent conditions in every month of meteorological winter. And with sustained above-freezing temperatures throughout March, a messy mud season is here to stay. Even 20 inches of snow on the mountains in mid-March fell upon muddy, thawed ground. So mud season conditions are quick to return.

Just like our dirt roads, dirt hiking trails are susceptible to damage during mud season. Hikers compact the soil, increasing erosion, and hiking around muddy sections widens the trail and tramples trailside vegetation. Hikers are advised to follow these guidelines when recreating in mud season conditions:

Check trail open/closed status on TrailFinder, which is updated weekly. Trails in state parks and forests are officially closed during mud season (that includes Camels Hump, Mount Mansfield, Jay Peak, and other popular hiking areas).

Seek out low elevation trails and durable surfaces during mud season. Dirt roads and rail trails statewide make for great long walks. See GMC's collection of mud season appropriate hikes here.

Stay flexible and adaptable. Be aware that mud season conditions can exist any month of the year. If you encounter significant mud on your way to a trailhead or summit, consider turning around and finding an alternative place to hike.

If you do continue, hike directly through mud to protect the land around the trail. Wear waterproof boots, gaiters, and use hiking poles to improve stability.

Try to check recent trail reports on forums like Hiking in Vermont (Facebook). Consider posting an honest trip report of your own to help other hikers and spread responsible stewardship.

Huntington Open Mic Night

Huntington Open Mic will be held on May 11. Sign-ups and doors open at 6:30 pm. Show starts at 7 pm.

Performers of all ages and all styles are wholeheartedly welcomed. Performances of all types are enthusiastically encouraged. Have a short story to tell? Jokes? Songs to sing? A one-act play to perform? Come on down. Just try and keep it to 8-10 minutes or less.

Admission by donation will benefit Brewster-Pierce Memorial School Partners in Education (BPMS PIE) as our highlighted organization. BPMS PIE is the family-school partnership group for BPMS - come learn about all the wonderful things they do to support our kids and school community.

A few details for those of you new to Open Mic Night: we'll have a PA and a couple mics set up on stands, ¼" cables if you'd like to plug in your acoustic guitar. Please email me in advance if you plan to play keys and I will provide a keyboard.

—*Marie Claire Johnson*, openmicnighthuntington@gmail.com

Lasagna Dinner

The Community Church of Huntington will hold a dinner on May 18, with serving beginning at 5 pm.

In addition to meat and vegetarian lasagna, the meal will include salad, garlic bread, jello salad, pickles and olives, and cherry cake.

Reservations are suggested, but not required.

For information, call or text Ellie (802)398-5320; ellielawyer93@gmail.com

Pay what you can. Suggested donation is $15.

The event will be held at 4910 Main Road, Huntington Center.

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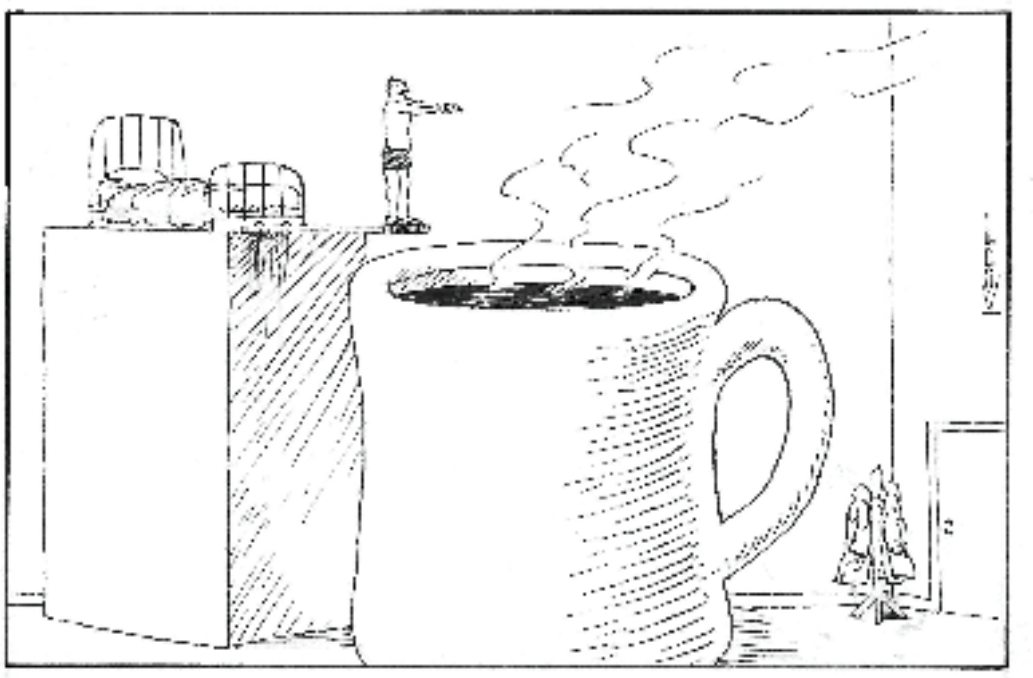

Green Up Day is May 4

Spend part of a Saturday working with other volunteers in your town to get rid of roadside trash. Help make your community look its best. What can be better than a spring day for people to get out and clean up litter and enjoy the outdoors and each other.

Richmond

"We're hoping for an enthusiastic response from Richmond to clean up our roadsides," said Green Up coordinator Ibit Wright. Here are some plans and resources.

The big green Green Up trash bags have already arrived at the Town Office. They are available in the front entryway. Green Up Vermont has a helpful and informative website: https://greenupvermontorg/.

A map of Richmond will be placed in the entryway of the Town Office. It's a big, plastic-coated paper map that can be reused each year. With it will be markers to indicate on the map the section of roadside where you want to collect trash. You can write your name and a description of your clean-up plans on a big sheet of paper there alongside the map.

Residents are encouraged to work together on the roadsides, to spread out and, as a community, cover the majority of the miles of road in Richmond. Leaders, known as "road coordinators," post their contact information on the laminated paper map, and post as "team leaders" on GUV's app, for people who want to work with others on a particular road that has a coordinator/leader.

Help the Road Crew by bringing your bags of collected trash and other large items to Richmond's Highway Garage at the end of Thompson Road. Questions: 802-434-2631.

Spread the word to participate—either on Saturday, May 4, or before, or the day after—Please do this in time for the work of Pete Gosselin and the Highway Department crew, who will collect the trash not delivered to the Highway Garage.

Huntington

In Huntington, call the Town Clerk's Office (434-2032) to sign up for a road or show up at the Town Garage in the morning on May 6. You can also sign up for a specific road or stretch of road through a link on the town website (huntingtonvt.org) and pick up your bags after May 1 from the Town Clerk to get an early start. If it is not windy, the bags will be on the front porch of the Town Office.

Safety First!

Please be extra safe and careful working along the roadsides picking up trash. Be sure to be highly visible with brightly colored clothing. Wear long pants, good footwear and gloves. Watch out for sharp objects. Check for ticks and protect yourself from the sun. Be sure to face oncoming traffic along roadsides. Don't handle any potentially hazardous material - let the coordinators know where and what it is; they will find the appropriate party to deal with it.

Visit http://www.healthvermont.gov for further information.

Bring your Green Up trash to the Town Garage on May 4, preferably before 12:30 pm - no early drop offs, please. Do not leave trash bags next to the road for someone else to collect. Tires and large objects can be left on the side of the road - report the location when you drop off your trash in Huntington and someone with a truck can go with you to pick up the items.

Remember...

Hand sanitizer will be available at the collection site in Huntington and the table will also include gloves.

And, don't forget to pick up a snack and a drink, courtesy of the Selectboard (tax dollars at work) when you stop by Green Up Central at the Town Garage.

—Heidi Racht, John and Heather Remy,
Coordinators

Round Church Concerts

The Richmond Historical Society will host a summer concert series in the Old Round Church featuring two local bands.

The first concert with headliners Forest Station, will be held on June at 7 pm. Admission will be donation. Any profits realized from the concert will go toward maintenance of the Old Round Church and/or projects of the Richmond Historical Society to preserve Richmond's History. Forest Station is a Vermont-based bluegrass group born in the Rocky Mountains and realized in the Greens. Its blend of high energy, tight pockets, and just enough improvisational grease will scratch your itch for real, honest bluegrass. Throughout the years, they have formed a communicative musical bond that has resulted in innovative string music spanning the traditional ideal and pushing a unique style into unknown territory. Their debut album, Earth Tones was released in April and is an ode to their Western roots, steeped in the mountain ranges, landscapes, and forests that surround them. It's evident in their songwriting that they have a deep appreciation for the natural world and the traditions of bluegrass music.

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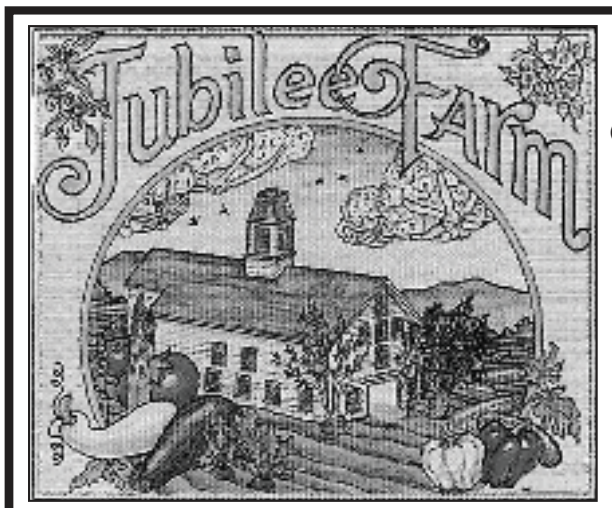

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Move immediately to a safe location. Call VGS at 800-639-8081 or call 911 with the exact location. Do not smoke or operate electrical switches or appliances. These items may produce a spark that might result in a dangerous condition. **Do not assume someone else will report the condition.**

Be safe

Scan the QR Code or visit vgsvt.com/be-safe for more safety information.

VGS

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library@richmondvt.gov

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Saturday 10 - 2
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434-3036

Welcome New Babies We greeted our youngest residents and future book lovers at our annual baby brunch and book dedication in early April. Families attending chose a picture book for the collection to be dedicated to their child. If you welcomed a baby to your Richmond household in 2023, stop by the youth desk and ask to see the picture book placed in the collection in honor of your child.

May Art Show Drop by to see the abstract landscapes of Hinesburg artist Rebecca Padula. Rebecca is a mixed media artist who enjoys finding ways to combine different materials to discover new effects. She has been mostly working with oil and cold wax, a type of thick oil painting that lends itself to building multi-layered, textured surfaces. Her abstract work is inspired by the natural world.

New STEAM Kit Each of the Library's STEAM Kits offer children and their grownups an opportunity to explore some subject encompassed in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) fields. If you have never taken home one of the Library's STEAM Kits, here is a good one to start with. Our new kit, Tiny Creatures (Bugs) contains four well-rounded and beautiful picture books that will instill an appreciation of tiny creatures from a scientific and poetic perspective. The kit also contains bug catching and viewing equipment suitable for young children. What young child does not like a good look at an interesting bug?

Summer Reading Program Summer will be here before we know it and with the hot days comes the Summer Reading Program at the library. The program will look a little different than it has in the past few years but will still feature weekly incentive charms and lots of interesting program options. Mark your calendar now for our summer kick-off show featuring Alyx the Magician on Friday, June 21, at 10 am.

Free Stuff Pause in the entryway and browse the bins. Everything is free! There are many adult DVDs featuring great movies and TV shows and adult fiction and nonfiction audiobooks on CD. See something you like – take it!

Cookbook Club Cookbook Club will not meet in May and will resume on June 8. Email Suzanne at skrohn@richmondvt.gov for information or to sign up for June.

Embroidery Evening Meet with the Green Mountain Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America to learn to start a new project, get advice, or stitch and socialize. All levels of experience are welcome. The group meets Tuesday, April 30, from 6 pm to 8 pm on the Mezzanine level. Email Mary Ann Kittinger (m.kittinger@aim.com) with any questions.

Seed Library Our new seed library is officially open for (free) business. Stop in to "check out" some of our seeds generously donated by High Mowing, Fedco, Annie's and Seed Savers Exchange. If possible, plan to save and bring back some of your harvested seeds for next year. Stop in or email skrohn@richmondvt.gov for more information.

(Mostly) Fiction Book Group Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge on May 14 at 6 pm to discuss The Music of Bees by Eileen Garvin. Contact Gwen Landis (434-5012; gwennie1972@yahoo.com) for information on joining this group.

Mystery Book Group Join us in the Mezzanine Lounge on May 16 at 7 pm to discuss The Late Show by Michael Connelly. Contact Maureen Parent (434-2055, msparent@gmavt.net) with any questions.

Climate Action Book Discussion In collaboration with Richmond Climate Action Committee, we will be discussing The Quickening: Creation and Community at the Ends of the Earth by Elizabeth Rush on May 22 at 7pm. Copies of the book are available at the library to borrow.

Swing Dance Lesson Due to overwhelming interest, we have scheduled a second opportunity for those who weren't able to participate in the swing dance lesson in April. Join us Sunday, May 5, at 6 pm to learn the basics from Terry Bouricius of Vermont Swings. To register, email skrohn@richmondvt.gov or call the Library.

Weekly/Monthly Children's Programs Weekly programs at the RFL run from September through May and follow the MMUUSD schedule for vacation days and weather closure days.

Storytime/Playgroup The good times kick off with stories and action songs in the Library Community Room and then the toys come out for free play with friends new and old. Co-sponsored by the Library and the Lund Center. Kids infant through five years and their grownups are invited to join the fun on Wednesdays from 10 am until noon.

Baby Laptime This short, active story time is for our youngest little book lovers and their grownups. We'll look at picture books, sing simple songs, do some rhyming and bouncing and sometimes get out the shakers and scarves. This program is designed for infants and early toddlers. Mondays at 10:30 am.

Hora del Cuento (Spanish Storytime) Join native Spanish speakers, Chichi and Eva for thirty minutes of picture book stories and rhymes. This program is a great introduction to Spanish for young children and a nice way for parents of older children placed in the Spanish Immersion Program to hear the language. Join us in the Community Room at 10:30 am on the third Saturday of every month, September through May.

Trustees Meetings Trustees Meetings are on the second Monday of the month via Zoom until further notice. All meetings are open to the public.

COVID Tests Once again, we've got them! Pick up your free tests at the circulation desk. It is wise to have them on hand prior to needing them, so stock up.

Huntington Public Library

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www.huntingtonlibraryvt.org

Vacation Afternoon Family Movie Matinee Join your friends and neighbors for a matinee. Friday, April 26, 2 pm. Families and children are invited to watch Kung Fu Panda (the first movie). Bring your friends and something cozy to snuggle with and we will pop the popcorn.

Periodicals Generous patrons have donated periodicals you may enjoy. Among them are: Northern Woodlands, Orion, The New Yorker and Consumer Reports.

First Friday Movie Night Friday, May 3, at 6 pm. This month's movie is Migration. Bring something cozy to sit on or with and we will pop the popcorn.

Story Time and Play Group Fridays, 9:30 am-10:30am. Bring your little person ages 0 – 5 to listen to some books, sing songs, do a little crafting, and have some fun. All are welcome.

Book Group Saturday, April 27, 10 am. Join a group of avid readers who love to discuss books. Since we missed March's read, The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, we will discuss this and The Tsar of Love and Techno by Anthony Marra.

New readers always welcome. The group meets every fourth Saturday of the month.

Afterschool Lego Club Fridays in May, 2:30 pm to 4:30pm. Games and drawing supplies are available for anyone who would needs a break from Legos. A light snack will be provided.

Weekly Coffee Chat with Don Dresser Wednesday at 9 am to11:30 am. Don has strong coffee and a variety of morning treats for a delicious way to break up the week by meeting friends in a great place. You can browse for books and check them out while you are there, too. Senior event sponsored by the Community Senior Center. Free event.

Adult Fiction A Court of Frost and Starlight and A Court of Silver Flames by Sarah Maas; The Starless Sea by Erin Morgenstern Becoming Mrs. Lewis by Patti Callahan; California Golden by Melanie Benjamin; The Hunter by Tana French; In the Sunshine or Shadow by Rhys Bowen; The Princess of las Vegas by Chris Bohjalian; The Road from Belhaven by Margot Livsey; The Underground Library by Jennifer Ryan.

Adult Nonfiction Mini-Forest Revolution: Using the Miyawaki Method to Rapidly Rewild the World by Hannah Lewis; The Source of Self Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches and Meditations by Toni Morrison; Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands by Kate Beaton; The Montessori Toddler and The Montessori Child by Simone Davies; Secrets of the Octopus by Sy Montgomery; Sentient: How Animals Illuminate the Wonders of Our Human Senses by Jackie Higgins.

Picture Books The Three Little Tardigrades by Sandra Fay; How Starling Got His Feathers by Keely Parrack; Big Bunny by Rowboat Watkins; Brave Baby Hummingbird by Sy Montgomery; The Last Stand by Antwan Eady; I Love You Like Yellow by Andrea Beaty.

Thanks to the Friends of the Huntington Public Library for sponsoring twelve new Vox Talking Books for children.

Juvenile Nonfiction Feasts and Festivals Around the World: From Lunar New Year to Christmas by Alice B. McGinty; Powered by Plants: Meet the Trees, Flowers and Vegetation that Inspired Our Everyday Technology by Clive Gifford; Home by Isabelle Simler; Lunar New Year by Natasha Yim; Science Comics: Elephants Living Large by Jason Viola.

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Please note that the Library will be closed on Monday, May 27, for Memorial Day.

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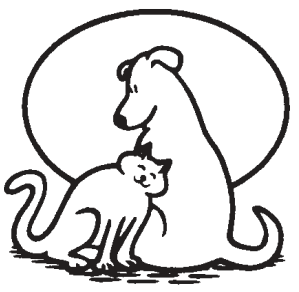
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TOWN OF HUNTINGTON

NOTICE OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

Zoom Meeting*

APPLICATIONS UNDER REVIEW FOR May 21, 2024 • 7 pm

The Huntington Development Review Board (DRB) will meet via Zoom to conduct the following business, pursuant to the Huntington Land Use Regulations:

Conditional Use Review

James Nathan Tutchon seeks approval for a Privacy/Decorative Fence and Garden Area on a 0.45 acre lot. Project is located in the Village District (1-acre zoning) on Main Road. Tax Map ID# 15-003.000

Subdivision

John Miles and Samantha Slayton seek Final Review for a two-lot subdivision of a 59-acre lot. Project is located in the Neighborhood District (1-acre zoning) and Rural Residential District (5-acre zoning) on Shaker Mountain Road. Tax Map ID# 08-019.100

The project information is available on the town website www.huntingtonvt.org. Participation in a hearing is required to appeal a decision of the DRB. Application materials may be viewed the week before the meeting.

–Yves Gonnet, DRB Staff, April 19, 2024

*Zoomhttps://us06web.zoom.us/j/84238853322?pwd=b3ZmXwa2pybLDnwpaPpu0tZL3HZPfN.1 Meeting ID: 842 3885 3322 ; Passcode: 172442 / Questions: 802-434-3557.

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COMMUNITY CHURCH OF HUNTINGTON

Sunday Worship Service will now be held in person and via Facebook.

Live at 9 am Sundays, on the Home Page of the website listed below.

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Huntington Selectboard

Reported by Paul Susen

The Huntington Selectboard met on March 18 and April 1. Actions and discussion included preparation for the solar eclipse, highway operations, erosion, Huntington Community Church, open meeting law, public notices and postings, land use maps, local emergency management plan, grant applications, driveway permit applications, Community Bank accounts, summer concert series, nominations, appointments, and open positions.

The Selectboard discussed its concerns, as well as those from the community, about the potential damage to Camels Hump State Park from people viewing the eclipse. Town Administrator Adam Argo researched options around closing roads. With the exception of residents, the Selectboard voted to close Camels Hump Road at the intersection with Taft Road from Sunday, April 7, at 9 am to Monday, April 8, at 4 pm.

Considerable attention was paid to highway department matters including truck replacement, culvert repair, paving, hiring, and speeding. The 2018 tandem truck needs to be replaced. In 2024, this truck has cost $9,000 in repairs. The new truck with a superior engine costs $275,000. A private sale of the current vehicle is being considered. The Selectboard agreed to revisit this item at its second meeting in April. As to paving, the Selectboard agreed to modify the plan. The new plan will include a shim and overlay on Main Road in Huntington Center as opposed to a reclaim. Included in the modified paving plan are two speed humps, the Fire Station parking lot and apron, the Town Office parking lot swale, and portions of Hinesburg Hollow Road and East Street. This modified plan is estimated to save $96,222 from the Highway Paving Reserve Fund. Under hiring, the Selectboard agreed to recruit two new crew members. Jonathan Dennis was expected to become Foreman in April with Yogi Alger switching to a transition position. Speeding continues to be a concern. Residents have reported excessive speed situations in various locations in Huntington. Traffic signs, radar signs and human resources will continue to be investigated.

Assessment and remediation of erosion are being examined at Brace Bridge, Texas Hill Road and Chalet Heights. Plans for mitigation at the FEMA site on Texas Hill Road may need to be modified. The process used to manage funding is challenging for municipalities. Barbara Elliot, in her transition role, will continue special project work on buyouts and erosion response.

Property Option The Community Church of Huntington has expressed interest in working on a dissolution clause. This legal statement if legally approved would provide the town with first option to purchase the property for $1.

Open Meeting Law and Public Notices The Open Meeting law was discussed. Best practice for handling email communication was reviewed. Outreach to the public around the complexity of the open meeting law is being considered. A challenge to the Selectboard alleging a violation of the open meeting law was denied.

The administration of notices and postings was determined. Regular meeting agendas will be posted at the Town Office, on the town website, at Beaudry's Store and sent to the Burlington Free Press. In addition, the agenda is emailed to a distribution list which is used for the circulation of minutes as well. Dependent on timing, public notices will be placed in the Times Ink!, Seven Days or Burlington Free Press. A copy of the notice will be placed at the Town Office and Beaudry's Store. A summary with a link to the notice will appear on social media. Also, notices will be posted on the town website.

Map Dilemma Land use maps continue to be a sore thumb for some residents and committee members. A resident noted that the town's land use regulations do not match the maps. Further, a Development Review Board member stated that the process that is in place to update the maps was not followed. The Selectboard stated that its will wait for deliberations on the issue by the Development Review Board and the Planning Commission. In other discussion, it was ascertained that the Selectboard does not have authority over the Zoning Administrator Officer.

Emergency Plan The local emergency plan for 2024 was passed. The plan will be submitted to Vermont Emergency Management, in the Department of Public Safety, and to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

The Selectboard approved the Town Administrator as a signer and an administrator of grants which are endorsed by the Selectboard. The Vermont Department of Transportation Highway structures and paving grant applications were due by April 15. The Fire Department has expressed interest in using the Property And Casualty Intermunicipal Fund Grant.

Driveway Permits A driveway permit application for 716 Economou Road was approved. Multiple driveway access continues to be an issue for the Selectboard. The land use regulations have changed and now do not address a second driveway cut. The Selectboard stated that convenience has not been seen as a legitimate rationale. An application for a second driveway access on Sherman Hollow Road was tabled. The matter will be investigated further as to where a definitive policy might exist.

The Town Treasurer had notified the Town Administrator that the signatories on certain Community Bank accounts needed to be changed. The Selectboard approved certain names being added and removed on the designated accounts.

Summer Concerts Plans for the summer concert series at the Rec Field are underway. The Recreation Committee and Charlie Frazier are planning the Wednesday evening summer events, which were quite a success last year.

Appointments The following were appointed to the designated positions (one year): Dori Barton, Chair of Selectboard and Fence Viewer; Landel Cochran, Vice-Chair of Selectboard and Weigher of Coal; Adam Argo, Recorder for Selectboard, a Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission alternate (last year of a two-year term), a Transportation Committee alternate (last year of a two-year term); Karen Barber, Inspector of Shingles and American with Disabilities Coordinator; Larry Haskins, Fence Viewer; Roman Livak, Fence Viewer.

Three-year Terms Adam Argeropoulos, Emergency Management Coordinator, Regional Emergency Management Committee; Jennifer Esser, Conservation Commission (remainder of three-year term); Ryan Elliott, Board of Listers (remainder of a three-year term).

Other Appointments Adam Argo, CCRPC Planning Advisory Committee (two years); Heidi Racht, John Remy and Heather Harnden as Green-Up coordinators; Matt Brace, Huntington Community Forest Stewardship Committee (six-year term); and Dave Cozzens, Billy Lewis, Donna Lewis, Heidi Racht, Paul Stephens and Tim Tinker as members of the Recreation Committee (two-year terms).

Volunteers Needed The following positions are open and seek interested volunteers: Auditor, Lister, Deputy Health Officer, Pound Keeper, Huntington Elder Resources and Opportunities committee, Recreation Committee, Town Hall Committee, Regional Planning Advisory Committee Alternate, and Regional Clean Water Advisory Committee Alternate.

Richmond Selectboard

Reported by Mark Aiken

It wasn't a joke… the Richmond Selectboard met on April 1, 2024, to discuss a range of topics. After a brief public comment period and prior to hitting the first agenda topic, Selectboard member Bard Hill brought up a Fire Department event on April 27, 2024. ("I thought we should mention it," he said). Hill also brought up piles of creosote-treated railroad ties along the tracks throughout town. "Creosote is a carcinogen," Hill said, adding that he has done some research that indicates that municipalities or the state could compel the railroad to remove the piles and properly dispose of them. Boardmembers acknowledged that the piles are the result of efforts in the past decade and a half to shift towards "welded rails."

Chris Cole, who serves on Richmond's Planning Commission and who also chairs Richmond's Transportation Committee (and who was in attendance for another agenda topic – keep reading!), offered that rail companies generally leave discarded ties along the tracks until they encounter "sustained pressure from a municipality" to remove them. Cole said he has seen instances where articles in the press move the process; "They don't like the bad P.R.," Cole said. The Board thanked him for the advice and moved on to their first agenda topic – solid waste.

Chittenden Solid Waste District Budget Sarah Reeves, Executive Director of the Chittenden Solid Waste District, presented her organization's 2025 budget. She began by introducing CSWD and clarified that none of their revenue streams include income tax, sales tax, or local property taxes. "Nor do we assess a municipal per capita fee," she said.

Reeves explained that solid waste collected in the district increased last year by about 4500 tons. However, the amount of waste diverted from landfills increased by over 44,000 tons. "The goal is always to not generate as much," she said. "So we continue to try to come up with ways to help folks learn how to not generate as much waste in the first place."

In the end, Selectboard members voted unanimously to approve the CSWD budget for the fiscal year 2025.

Intersection by the Round Church You'd think a four-way intersection would be a straightforward issue, but anyone who has followed auto, bicycle, and pedestrian use of Cochran Road, and the emotion and passion surrounding it, knows that the next agenda item was a big one for the Selectboard. Transportation Committee Chair Chris Cole and other committee members presented two options for improving the intersection of Huntington Road, Bridge Street, Thompson Road, and Cochran Road. Cole noted that the committee used an outside expert consultant to study the intersection. The preferred option for the intersection is a roundabout, which carries an $800,000 price tag. "We discarded it as too costly," Cole said.

The other options are a four-way stop and a "mounted island." Both have price tags (significantly cheaper than the roundabout – the four-way costs $100,000 and the island costs $72,000) and pros and cons. Another alternative – not changing anything – is less desirable as it is currently deemed a Vermont Transportation Department "high crash location."

The discussion continued with Richmond Highway Foreman Peter Gosselin offering that he didn't think the four-way stop option alleviates traffic congestion; he also said that the mounted island, depending on its height, could be plowed over in the winter. Denise Barnard suggested that antique style traffic lights would be appropriate at the intersection by the Round Church. Selectboard members decided to solicit public comments and discuss the matter further in a future meeting.

Capital Budget Plan for 2025 Selectboard members and Town Manager Josh Arneson held a brief discussion on a topic they have been working on in previous meetings – the capital plan for fiscal year 2025. After the discussion, Board members voted to adopt the proposed capital plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Letter Breck Knauft, executive director of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, asked for a letter of support as part of an application for funding for increased staff housing on the VYCC Richmond campus. He specified that the letter isn't the same as approval to begin construction. The Board voted to support writing the letter, which would be drafted by Town Manager Arneson and Board member Jay Furr.

Review of Highway Department's Summer Plan Highway Foreman Gosselin went over his department's summer work plan – a plan, said Gosselin, that was the most difficult in his career due to the amount of work the department had to do last year after July floods. The work includes a stormwater project on Tilden Avenue, repairs to Snipe Ireland Road, and more.

Next Steps for Town Center and Library Buildings Committee Much work went into a proposal for the Town Center and Library buildings, which was voted down at Town Meeting Day. Board members and residents who attended the meeting discussed that vote and possible next steps. Resident Tess Storrs commented that the first she heard about the proposal was practically in the days leading up to the Town Meeting Day vote; had she had more information sooner, she may have voted differently. The Board brainstormed reasons behind the election day result and possible next steps for the committee. It decided to revisit this issue – which does need to be resolved at some point – at a future meeting.

American Rescue Plan Act Review and a Recreation Summit The next two agenda items were briefly discussed. The Board reviewed where the town stands on ARPA spending; Town Manager Arneson said he would research this more thoroughly for an upcoming meeting. Meanwhile, they set May 13, 2024, at 6 pm as the date and time of a meeting of key recreation people.

Preserving Browns Court for Recreation After hearing much public comment on this matter, the Board discussed creating an easement preserving Browns Court for recreation and not allowing housing to be built on the space.

continue to page 17

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TAX NOTICE

Town of Richmond

Fourth Quarter 2023-2024 taxes payment due
Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

The Town Office is open to the public on May 15, 8 am to 4 pm.

A 8% penalty and late fee of 1% interest will be applied to late payments on May 16.

Internet-generated checks do not normally include a postmark, so MUST arrive on or before May 15.

Postmark of May 15 will be accepted and there is a TOWN CENTER DROP BOX located by the side door across from the post office entrance.

Town of Huntington

Fourth & Final Installment of 2023-2024 taxes is due on
Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

HOURS: Monday, 8 to 7 • Tuesday, 8 to 3 • Wednesday, 8 to 4

- Payments mailed with a readable USPS postmark of May 15th or earlier are considered on time.
- Payments placed in the town office drop box before midnight of the due date will also be accepted as on time.
- Metered mail and internet generated payments do not normally include a postmark so these must be delivered by the due date or they will be considered late.
- In office payments are accepted by check or cash only.

Since this is the final payment of the year, late payments are subject to an 8% delinquency penalty along with a monthly 1% interest charge.

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MMU Competitors Take Best Overall Team in Mock Trial

The MMU Mock Trial Team Members with Competition Organizer Judge Geoffrey Crawford. From left: Macey Aikman, Willa Pelshoen, Madelyn Lloyd, Judge Crawford, Adi Crary, Gracie Batsie, Ella Nurkanovic

On April 6, the Vermont High School Mock Trial Competition was held at Vermont Law School in South Royalton. Mount Mansfield UHS (MMU) sent 20 students to the competition on three trial teams. Teams from seven schools from Vermont participated in the competition. The case was a murder case in which the owner of a movie company was charged with killing a business partner. The competition was judged by Vermont Court System judges.

MMU was judged the Best Overall Team after two preliminary trials and a championship round. Willa Pelsschoen, a senior at MMU, received the Best Prosecutor Award and MMU senior Macy Aikman received the Best Prosecution Witness Award.

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MMUUSD Board

Reported by Diane Wester

School Board Meetings, March 2024

Housekeeping Edye Graning was elected as chair, Tara Arneson as Vice Chair, and Lia Pawlik, Clerk. The Board welcomed new member Stephen Diglio (Bolton).

Re-elected members Gail Conley (Huntington), and Susan Lillich (Jericho) began their new terms. Graning nominated Tom Ferstle for one year, and Sandra Limoge for three years as representatives from Jericho. As there were no candidates from Jericho this year, the Board can appoint representatives until they have the opportunity to run for office. They were unanimously approved by the Board.

New Underhill Principal David Marlow, a 12-year veteran of MMUUSD, was appointed 2024-2025 Principal of Underhill Central School. Marlow was selected from a good pool of candidates, including some from within the district. Tara Arneson asked about the balance between male and female administrators in the district, and Superintendent John Alberghini replied that it was totally dependent on the current pool of candidates for any given position. Some years there are more female administrators, but today there are more male administrators.

Committee Reports Descriptions of each of the committees were given, offering the opportunity for the newly constituted Board to make a decisions as to where to serve.

Community Engagement and Communications The Board cannot answer questions from community members at the meetings due to the Open Meeting Law. However, the committee is trying to develop a method in which to provide answers to the community the the widest and quickest way. It is also going to develop a more effective way to recruit candidates for the Board.

Finance The budget cycle will begin again in the fall. The Finance Committee will develop the budget in the fall to be presented to the Board in January. It continues to develop a five-year facilities and maintenance budget.

The 2023 Board Survey answers were shared and discussed. The Board decided the policies are clear, available on line, and work as checks and balances on the Superintendent.

The Golden Apple Awards will be presented May 20. Board members who have completed their service will be recognized. The nominations are open, and volunteers are needed to review the nominees. Call either Susan Lillich or Alison Conant.

School Calendar The Superintendents of the Addison, Chittenden, Franklin and the Technical Schools have agreed on a school calendar that begins on August 26 for students. Schools will be closed on Election Day, November 5 as many schools are voting places. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Day January 20, and Eid al-Fitr, March 31, will be school holidays.

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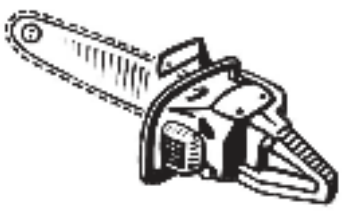

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Area Resident's Group Gets History Award

"I am part of an amazing team to begin to strategize the development of a Burlington History & Culture Center where everyone can learn, grow, and find a 'place' among the stories of people — just like us — trying to make our communities better," says filmmaker, TV host, and author Melinda Moulton of Huntington. She is co-founder of the Burlington History & Culture Center, along with Chittenden County community leaders Elise Guyette, Gail Rosenberg, and Lisa Evans.

Moulton states, "In my work redeveloping the Burlington waterfront, I created a history show and I realized in that moment that so much has been written about the rail and steamship barons and the moneyed families, but barely anything about the actual human beings who built our Queen City. This Center will focus on them and their stories and this is what has drawn me to this project." She adds, "The human stories are beautiful, deep, engaging, and enlightening."

The four co-founders are working toward a community-based Center that will broaden our historical knowledge and perspectives on Burlington to illuminate the flow of our diverse history. They share a vision that "History belongs to everyone, and we all belong in history." For these reasons, they are planning to gather information by holding focus and discussion groups, conducting interviews, and distributing surveys to hundreds of residents across the city, working in collaboration with varied organizations.

The Center is one of eight groups to be awarded the inaugural multi-year Partnership Grants from Vermont Humanities. It requested the maximum allowed amount of $10,000 and is pleased to have been awarded the full request. This grant is for $10,000 a year for three years to gather ideas, topics, perspectives, and designs for a new Center that will highlight historically underrepresented people whose ideas, traditions, and labor formed (and are still forming) the culture of the city. Based on the responses, the co-founders will determine the site and design of the venue.

In 1974, Moulton, along with her husband Rick Moulton, founded Rick Moulton Productions, a documentary and legacy film company. Their work is documented at www.rickmoulton.com. Currently, they are producing a film on Ethan Allen — The Man and The Myth. Moulton has a TV show Moments with Melinda on CCTV and syndicated across the state. As the CEO of Main Street Landing for 40 years, she dedicated her life to environmental and socially-conscious redevelopment and she created a new and exciting philosophy for development, including a team approach to design, development, and construction. She led the redevelopment of the Burlington Waterfront and spearheaded 250,000 square feet of built environment on the waterfront. Moulton retired from Main Street Landing in 2022 to pursue her many passions.

She has chaired or been a trustee of various organizations such as Burlington Parking & Transportation Council, Burlington Business Association, the Lake Champlain Sailing Center, the Intervale Center, Vermont Folklife Center, and Williston Restorative Justice Center. Moulton co-chaired multiple million-dollar capital campaigns for the Lund Center and Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and presently serves on the Planned Parenthood of Northern New England Action fund and is a Trustee for the ACLU-Vermont Foundation.

The other co-founders bring varied and complementary experience to the project. Historian, educator, and author Elise Guyette co-directed Turning Points in American History for Vermont teachers. Her publications include Vermont: A Cultural Patchwork and Discovering Black Vermont for which she was awarded the 2010 Richard O. Hathaway prize for outstanding contributions to the field of Vermont history. Gail Rosenberg is a writer, fundraiser, and communications specialist, who co-founded the country's first clearinghouse on innovative work schedules, promoted a 10-year sold out run of the Big Apple Circus for Shelburne Museum, and ran a multi-million dollar capital campaign for Howard Center. Guyette and Rosenberg co-founded two walking tours, Burlington Edible History and More than a Market, which told the stories of various immigrant groups along with their food traditions and food businesses. Lisa Evans has a diverse background in historical preservation, community engagement, and nonprofit management. She is former executive director of the St. Albans Museum. All serve on the Boards of community and/or statewide nonprofits.

For more information about the Burlington History & Culture Center, contact Moulton at melindamoultonvt@gmail.com.

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Town Meeting Day Sees

Huntington Meeting Concludes at Noon

Reported by Paul Susen

The Huntington Town Meeting took place in person on March 6, 2024, at the Brewster-Pierce Memorial School. The meeting was well attended throughout the morning. After some discussion, all articles passed without objection. There were presentations by Senator Hardy, Representative Stevens and Representative Woods, Huntington Lister Susan Gulrajani, and a group of students from the University of Vermont. The Olga Hallock Award was presented to Paula Kelley. Retired Town Administrator Barbara Elliot and retiring Highway Foreman Yogi Alger were both commended. The new Town Administrator Adam Argo and Road Foreman Jonathan Dennis were introduced.

Article 1, required by law, certifies that Town Officers are elected by Australian ballot. This article is not voted.

Article 2 allows for the hearing of reports. The article was not objected to. A summary of reports and presentations appears below.

Article 3, which authorizes collection of taxes, and Article 4, which allows for taxes to be paid in quarterly installments, were affirmed.

Articles 5,6 and 7 asked voters to support the Selectboard recommendations that monies be moved from the General Fund fund balance to particular highway reserve accounts. After monies are transferred, the General Fund fund balance will be above the required contingency of $125,000 and closer to $200,000. The amounts being reallocated, and the respective reserves are as follows: $118,000 to the Highway Bridge Reserve (Article 5); $42,826 to the Highway Paving Reserve (Article 6) and $5,000 to the Highway Equipment Reserve (Article 7). After discussion, these three articles were each voted with no opposition.

Article 8 requested that voters agree to the Selectboard recommendation of a 4.9% increase in expenditures. Under point of order, a resident noted that a typographical error existed in the warning of this article. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 was amended by a vote from the floor to Fiscal Year 2024-2025. The proposal calls for a total budget of $2,395,465 of which $2,008,920 will be collected from taxes and $386,544 is non-tax revenue. Discussion included comments on the solar array on the library roof, meeting hybrid technology, debt service and borrowing, use of ARPA dollars and the process to commit the unallocated amount, building permits, the certificate of occupancy fee, and the number and function of drivers with commercial driver licenses. The FY 2024-2025 budget passed without objection.

Article 9 allows residents to bring up any non-binding business. Discussion included conservation projects, the Lower Village wastewater feasibility and affordability process, zoning regulations (specifically mapping), and the recent change to not allow people headed to the Community Forest to cross private land due to an unfortunate lack of respect displayed by some hikers (alternative paths are being explored but any modification will take time).

Senator Hardy discussed housing, flood recovery and resilience, infrastructure, the definition of first responders, grant programs, public safety, financing schools, and the open meeting law. Representative Stevens reviewed the status of bills in general including a broad perspective and focused specifically on housing. Representative Woods referenced the 650 children who are being housed temporarily in motels. She also commented on remediation to avoid death from drug overdoses. Representative Stevens expressed his thanks for Representative Woods' tireless efforts to deal with some very tough and critically important issues affecting vulnerable individuals and families.

Huntington Lister Susan Gulrajani reviewed the property reappraisal process, which has been underway since last year and will be completed by June 2025. The last appraisals were completed in 2015. This round will affect the 2025 tax bills.

Students from the University of Vermont are working with the Conservation Commission on flood resilience strategies in Huntington. They delivered a formal presentation on the reasons for the problems and ideas on what can be done with good planning and adequate professional and financial resources. A separate group of University of Vermont students are working with the Conservation Commission on climate adaptability and they were available at a table with a display and answered questions.

Heidi Racht presented the 2024 Olga Hallock award to Paula Kelley. Racht mentioned a long list of Kelley's community accomplishments and involvement including School Board, Library Trustee, Cemetery Trustee, Haunted Forest volunteer, and Times Ink! director.

Photos, clockwise, from top left: Paula Kelley, recipient of the Olga Hallock Award for Community Service; Selectboard board members Dori Barton. Larry Haskins Junior and Everett Lewis Junior; Jeannette Segale, left, co-chair of the Conservation Commission, introduces UVM students who will present the results of their work in the town on addressing flood resiliency; Nat Weaver makes point; Scott Hansen asks a question about the highway budget.

Huntington Town Meeting Photos:
Bobbi LoCicero

Well-Attended Meetings

Richmond Has Mixed Results

Submitted by Linda Parent

Residents gathered March 5 at Camels Hump Middle School to take care of the business of our town. Moderator Clint Buxton welcomed all and reviewed the ins and outs of the procedures of the meeting. A moment of silence in honor of veterans and those now serving in the military to protect the freedoms we have today. Boy Scout Troop #23 served as Honor Guard and presented the national and state flags. This year, approximately 250 people attended the in-person meeting, many more than in previous years. In attendance were 11 members of the AmeriCorp group serving with the Williston FEMA office.

Town Manager Josh Arneson presented the proposed budget of $4,819,779 to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town for Fiscal Year 2025. After the presentation, Richmond resident, Cara LaBounty proposed an amendment to remove $200,000 from the budget. This was proposed to lower the tax rate. This vote was taken by "paper ballot" and was defeated; Yes to reduce the budget and No to hold the budget at the printed amount. The budget later passed in the original amount of $4,819,779 by voice vote.

Other articles were voted on and approved to support social service groups listed in the warning, totaling $16,760.

Jeff Forward gave a presentation of the Article 12 bond vote, regarding the renovation & capital improvements to the Richmond Town Center. This article was voted by Australian ballot. The total proposed bond would have been $9,841,603, subject to reduction of grant funds and other state & federal aid. This bond vote was defeated, with a vote of Yes 666 and No 772.

Article 13 on the ballot was to approve funding the Conservation Fund by adding one cent to the town tax rate. This article passed, Yes 1014 and No 420.

Close to 1500 voters cast their ballots early and throughout the day.

All unopposed officers were elected: Clint Buxton, Moderator; Jay Furr, three-year Selectboard; Dennis Gile, Cemetery Trustee; Rafael Kennedy, Library Trustee; Andy Squires, Constable; and Katie Nelson, MMUUSD School Director.

This year, the ballot had one contested race for the two-year position of Selectboard member: Adam Wood was the winner with 878 votes. His opponent was Matthew Moultroup with 458 votes.

Under other non-binding business, a resolution was presented and approved to support an immediate and permanent ceasefire by both Hamas and Israeli governments. This was supported by the agreement of those present.

Also under non-binding business, the question of shall the town investigate developing housing on the town owned property located on Browns Court, locally referred to as Browns Court Ballfield. The consensus of those present was that the ballfield should remain a recreational area, with the possibility of housing to be explored elsewhere in Richmond.

Thanks were expressed to Selectboard member Jeff Forward who is stepping down from the board.

Thanks to all who volunteered their time to be election workers and the groups who set up their information and wares for all the town to see. Special thanks to the Boy Scouts of Troop #23 who helped set up and tear down the gymnasium. Thank you to the staff of Camels Hump Middle School for their assistance with the day. The lunch this year was sponsored by the Community Senior Center. It was a tremendous hit! Thank you.

Photos, clockwise, from top right: Photographer Jared Katz, as seen through the lens of photographer Jake Levison; the view from the back of the room shows a good Town Meeting Attendance; Elections officials Marshall Paulsen, Francis Churchill, and Becky Vigneault; Mary Houle spoke passionately in favor of retaining the current uses of Browns Court, a property, she recalled from childhood, was intended to remain a place for play and recreation in perpetuity; Jack Linn speaks in support of the police, and also of reducing the budget by $200,000 in accordance with Cara LaBounty's motion to amend the budget. Linn expressed his support and respect for the officers and also his support for reducing the budget wherever possible; Daphne Loesel looks to mom, Katie, after happily receiving her mom's "I voted" sticker.

Richmond Town Meeting Photos
Jared Latz (color) & Jake Levison (black & white)

Canine Visitor Inspires Student Writing

Ms. Motta's First Grade Class at Brewster-Pierce Memorial School has a regular canine visitor each week. Tipper and his humans, Juliet and Papa Pete, come to visit and interact with the students and adults during writing time. Tipper inspires the writers. Please read their work below.

Tipper is a therapy dog and Tipper is soft. The color of Tipper is black. Tipper is gentle. Tipper is 13.
I really, really like Tipper
—Gretta

Tipper is a therapy dog and therapy dogs help people stay calm.
—Kassel

Tipper is a therapy dog. Tipper is soft.
—Emmett

Tipper is a girl with long fingernails and she has long whiskers. Tipper is 13.
—Hunter

Tipper is a therapy dog. She is fun and gentle, soft and cute and cuddly! She is a girl and she is 13 years old.
—Alyssa

Tipper is a therapy dog, she is sweet and soft. Her fur is black. She is 13.
—Atom

Tipper the therapy dog and the star visitor to Ms. Motta's First Grade class, calmly enjoys the attention of some of her many admirers.

She walks around the classroom. Tipper has soft fur. Feel her fur.
—Kayra

Tipper is gentle and playful. She likes to come. Her color is black. She is 13 years old.
—Rylie

Tipper is a therapy dog. I like Tipper because she is black.
—Elena

Tipper is a therapy dog. She is gentle. Tipper is fun. She is soft and Tipper is playful. Tipper is black. Tipper has big whiskers. Tipper is 13 years old.
—Evan

Tipper came to visit. I like when she visits. Tipper is 13 years old.
—Emmet

Juliet and Papa Pete look at the work done by the students during the classroom visit by Tipper, the therapy dog. Photos: Aimee Motta

Tipper is a black dog. I love that she walks around the school.
—Oliver

Tipper is a therapy dog and a nice dog. Tipper's color is black.
—Opal

Tipper is a therapy dog. She has dark fur.
—Sully

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State House News

Rep. Tom Stevens

The work of the legislature is rocketing to a close. Early expectations are that we will adjourn on May 10, but given the wide gaps in agreement between the House and Senate on key bills and issues, it may take longer than that. I wrote earlier about the process involved with how bills work their way through the House and Senate, and we are in the middle of it now. Bills and concepts the House passed are being ignored or mangled beyond recognition, as the Senate may have different "priorities" than the House. It doesn't happen with every bill, but it is happening with the housing bills we passed several weeks ago that contain the framework of a plan to develop housing that is affordable over the next ten years.

My committee, using existing programs that needed adjustment to acknowledge that we needed to raise revenue in order to help subsidize both public and private housing construction and rehabilitation, passed H.829 with input from the Human Services Committee and the Ways and Means Committee, as well as H.639, which proposes to enforce flood risk disclosure in home sales, rentals and mobile home parks, as well as finally providing a solution to a knotty problem with tenancy in recovery residences after many years. H.687, from the Energy and Environment Committee, proposes changes to Act 250 that are meaningful and protects the environment (as Act 250 is meant to do) while allowing for construction to occur in more places, as long as it is done thoughtfully and within some of the more lenient provisions proposed.

H.829, in particular, is groundbreaking for two reasons: it is the first time in generations where a plan has been developed at the legislative level to address the housing shortage in a multitude of ways, and it proposes two pieces of extremely progressive tax policy that would provide a tax break on over 90% of primary residence purchases, while raising $17.5 million to help build more affordable housing and support adjacent programs by raising the marginal tax rate on property sales of over $750,000. For the next fiscal year, a new marginal tax rate on the income tax of Vermonters who make over $400K if filing singly and $500K if filing jointly will generate approximately $75 million, which is proposed to be used to build thousands of affordable units and shelters — reducing the retail expenditures of over $50M a year on substandard hotels — over the next 10 years.

Sounds good? Not to the Senate. They are focused on different priorities, such as the kind of regulatory changes that will allow construction in places we do not care to see, and taxing second home owners in a way that does not yet have a clear way of happening. So the progressive and reasonable policies in H.829 may not see the say. There are several weeks to go and negotiations will continue and we remain hopeful that our combined efforts will receive enough support to override the inevitable vetoes from the Governor.

In better news, we are on the brink of passing S.102, which started in the Senate, that would increase labor and organizing protections for Vermonters who wish to seek to organize in their workplace. Our American and Vermont history is rife with the desire to prevent workers from organizing, and the provisions in S.102 will level the field between labor and management when workers choose to seek to organize. Complementary to S.102 is PR 3, a proposal to amend our constitution to enshrine the right to organize. PR 3 passed through our committee this week and may be on the floor of the House by the end of April. It has already passed the Senate, and if it passes the House, it will need to repeat the same process next biennium. If it passes again, it will go to the voters in November 2026.

Rep. Theresa Wood

The House recently passed a bill, S.25, relating to regulating cosmetic and other products containing certain chemicals and chemical classes. Many of these chemicals are known as "forever chemicals" because they essentially do not break down. Among them are perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoro-alkyl substances (PFAS), which are found in many everyday products like paper plates, clothing, cosmetics, menstrual products, artificial turf, just to name a few.

The State's only landfill, located in Coventry, testified to the efforts they are undertaking to remove these chemicals, primarily PFAS, from leaching into the ground water. In fact, the federal government recently issued requirements for municipal water supply testing and remediation. Because this is a public health as well as an environmental issue, the House Human Services Committee (my committee) took a great deal of testimony to further strengthen the bill sent to us from the Senate. This bill prohibits a number of chemicals from being intentionally added by the manufacturer to certain products. These products include juvenile products designed or marketed for use by infants and children under 12 years of age including items like booster seats, changing pads, play mats, single-use diapers, etc.

Other products where the intentional addition of these chemicals is prohibited are textiles including clothing, swimwear, footwear, reusable diapers, leggings, etc. Additional limitations are placed on cookware, stain and water-resistant treatments, rugs and carpets, certain firefighting foam and food packaging.

During the process of taking testimony, it became apparent that the general public is not aware of the presence of these chemicals in everyday products. Therefore, we require the Department of Health to develop a community engagement plan to provide education to the public on chemicals of concern. The Department will return to the Legislature with an implementation plan by July 1, 2025.

Over the last several years, the Legislature has dealt with these public health and environmental issues on a product-by-product basis. And given the broad impact of these chemicals, jurisdiction crosses over several departments and agencies. In S.25 we ask the Agency of Natural Resources in consultation with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, the Department of Health and the Office of the Attorney General to propose a program requiring the State to identify and restrict the sale and distribution of consumer products containing PFAS that could impact public health and the environment. This report is due back by November 1, 2024.

These chemicals will continue to plague the environment and the people of Vermont. They are pervasive, and in some situations, there are no currently known alternatives. They do serve a significant purpose in many of the products, and as the committee worked on this bill, we focused on those items where there was an available alternative. Just think about looking at the ingredient list when you are standing in the store making a decision about what frying pan to purchase, or what is added to your outdoor wear to make it water resistant.

The bill was passed unanimously by the House and was returned to the Senate for their final vote before being sent to the Governor for signature.

Rep. Jana Brown

Bills are moving quickly in the State House as we head into the final weeks before our mid-May adjournment date. My next update in May is likely to come after we've closed out the regular 2024 legislative session, and I'll be writing a comprehensive final end of session report at the end of May. This update will focus on an issue that is top of mind for many Vermonters: challenges with health insurance.

We've all likely heard from family, friends, and community members about challenges with health insurance. While Vermont has a very low uninsured rate, many Vermonters under 65 years of age are underinsured, meaning their current or potential future medical expenses are more than what their income can support in costs. The percentage of underinsured Vermonter increased from 30% in 2014 to 37% in 2018 to 40% in 2021.

Our healthcare system is complex with a variety of insurance payers: self-insured, Medicaid, Medicare, Medicare Advantage, and Vermont Health Connect are examples. The House Health Care Committee worked hard this session to craft H.721, the Medicaid Expansion Act of 2024. Vermont's Medicaid program is working for Vermonters. Medicaid is a comprehensive public health program funded jointly by Vermont and the federal government. With little to no copays involved, this program provides Vermonters with access to affordable health care. Vermont's Medicaid program provides comprehensive coverage for a full array of health care services, including primary and specialty care; reproductive care; hospital and surgical care; prescription drugs; long-term care; mental health, dental and vision care; disability services; and more. Close to a third of all Vermonters, including a majority of all children in the state, have coverage through Vermont Medicaid making it the largest insurance program in Vermont. Due to changing federal requirements, many of these Vermonters are at risk of losing their comprehensive, low or no-cost health coverage.

H.721 expands the coverage provided by Vermont's Medicaid program in the following ways:

• Increasing Dr. Dynasaur up to age 21 beginning in January 2026 and helping more than 1,500 young adults in Vermont access health care. Today when a 19 year old is required to exit Medicaid, many go uninsured. Maintaining access to health care drives down long term costs.

• Expanding access to healthcare for pregnant individuals from 207% of the federal poverty limit to 312% of the federal poverty limit to ensure pregnant individuals have the prenatal and postnatal care they need.

• Expanding Vermont's Medicare Savings Program (MSP), a state/federal program that exists to help people with Medicare afford their insurance and access health care. Today, when a Vermonter with Medicaid insurance turns 65 they must shift to Medicare and incur Part B premiums and out of pocket costs. Currently, our Medicare Savings Program only supports monthly incomes up to $1,255 (one person household) and $1,705 (two-person household). H.721 brings these income thresholds up to $2,385 and $3,236. This change will allow close to 20,000 older Vermonters to have their Part B premiums covered so that they can use the savings to pay for other necessary living expenses.

• Commissions a technical analysis for the expansion of Vermont Medicaid to 312% of the federal poverty level for all Vermonters by 2030.

The bill proposes a revenue package to fund the state share of these critical expansions by adjusting the fees applied to securities companies, increasing the top corporate tax rate for C-corporations (not LLCs, pass throughs, or partnerships), and reducing an exemption in reported net income to Vermont for corporations with certain type of foreign earnings. These investments in health care access will be funded by making sure corporations pay their fair share so we can provide needed support to Vermonters.

Rep. Theresa Wood
Washington-Chittenden
Chair, House Human Services Committee

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Fun Times at MMU Theatre

A letter from MMU students to Governor Phil Scott inviting him to take a non-speaking part in the school's spring musical, Little Shop of Horrors, resulted in the Governor appearing onstage on opening night — and also writing some self-deprecating lines for his character that produced much laughter from the audience.

Said Candy Padula, the play's director, "We were certainly honored to have Governor Phil Scott accept our invitation. It was truly such a memorable and exciting experience for us all."

Governor Phil Scott bravely withstood a dramatic dental procedure on stage in Mount Mansfield Union High School's production of Little Shop of Horrors.

Padula explained, "The Governor sent us a scene that he wrote to follow the dentist song that we added in at the very last minute, so that was an added bonus."

Monica Hutt, a member of the Governor's office staff, told the students and adults who worked with him at his theatrical debut, "The Governor was awed by what he saw on Friday night. He has not stopped talking about it for three days. He was so impressed with the professionalism, preparation, graciousness and talent of the students. He said with these skills and the ability to work together to pull off a show like this, these students will go so far. He said that he's been to professional productions that were not as well thought out and executed as the performance on Friday night. He was absolutely amazed."

Padula enthused, "The Governor was a natural performer on stage. He played his role as a reluctant dental patient with gusto and received a good number of laughs for his scene where he protested about the dental estimate he received. He complained about the high cost of novocaine and opted to skip it to save himself some money. Then after the Dentist (played by MMU Junior Brady Gouse) performed some dental surgery on the Governor, the Governor said that the procedure wasn't so bad. "No worse than one of my weekly press conferences," he declared. But when the Governor was presented with his final bill, he objected to the added "pain tax." The Dentist responded, "The state needs to get its share."

The Governor complained about the addition of a pain tax on the dental bill he received in MMU's musical production of Little Shop of Horrors. Photos: Andrew McClellan.

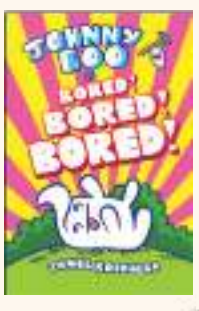
"Please thank your students for being so incredibly wonderful, creative, and accommodating – it truly takes skilled actors and actresses to be able to add to a scene just hours before showtime (on opening night, none the less!)"

—from the Office of Governor Phil Scott

Celebrate Independent Bookstore Day with Phoenix Books - Saturday, April 27th

Burlington
1-3 pm
By donation:
1-minute portraits by cartoonist James Kochalka!

Donations will benefit Very Merry Theater



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News from Area Churches

Richmond Congregational Church

802-434-2053 (www.rccucc.org)

April 28: 10 am Worship Service with Rev. Katelyn Macrae

May 5: 10 am Worship Service with Rev. Katelyn Macrae & Jeffrey Tuper-Giles, Vermont UCC Open and Affirming Coordinator; Open and Affirming Q and A during coffee hour; Sunday School

May 12: 10 am Worship Service with Rev. Katelyn Macrae; Mother's Day

May 19: 10 am Worship Service Rev. Doug Wysockey-Johnson; RCC Choir sings

May 26: 10 am Worship Service with Rev. Katelyn Macrae

Lasagna Dinner

The Community Church of Huntington will hold a dinner on May 18, with serving beginning at 5 pm.

In addition to meat and vegetarian lasagna, the meal will include salad, garlic bread, jello salad, pickles and olives, and cherry cake.

Reservations are suggested, but not required.

For information, call or text Ellie (802)398-5320; ellielawyer93@gmail.com

Pay what you can. Suggested donation is $15.

The event will be held at 4910 Main Road, Huntington Center.

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Calendar of Events

APRIL 28: Brahms and Beethoven: Romani and Scottish Songs, 3 pm, St Paul's Cathedral, Burlington. Three of Vermont's finest classical instrumentalists join the singers of Counterpoint for a fascinating intersection of folk traditions and classical music: Johannes Brahms's passionate Zigeunerlieder and Ludwig van Beethoven's Scottish folksongs. Plus piano trio movements by Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann.Counteroint Vocal Ensemble, Check the full schedule at: www.counterpointchorus.org/upcoming/

MAY 4: Green Up Day

MAY 4: Mozart's Requiem in D minor, K626 - one of the world's most beloved choral works - by the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, 7:30 pm, the Flynn Center, Burlington. Tickets: 802-863-5966.

MAY 10: The Vermont Historical Society's League of Local Historical Societies & Museums 70th annual conference, Hotel Coolidge, White River Junction on May 10th, 2024. This year's theme is titled Now & Then. What has changed in the last 70 years for local historical societies and museums and what has stayed the same? A report from the first conference notes that organizations should have "a real story to tell" and emphasized the importance of "attracting the interest of children and young people," which might sound familiar to many of us today. Presenters and attendees will explore some of the bedrocks of doing local history and ways to accomplish them today, learn more about how we can utilize the impending 250th anniversary of the US as a rallying point in our own communities, and learn from the experts in our ever popular practical and hands-on sessions.

JUNE 7-8: The American Cancer Society's 33rd Annual Relay For Life of Chittenden County to help end cancer as we know it, Champlain Valley Exposition from Friday 6:30 pm, to Saturday, 6:30 am. This year's theme will be Star Light, Star Bright – Wish Upon a Cure Tonight, and will celebrate and recognize survivors, thrivers, and caregivers. The funds raised go towards cancer research, advocacy, and patient support, such as the Hope Lodge in Burlington, a 24/7 hotline, and rides to treatment. To learn more or join, visit www.relayforlife.org/chittendenvt.

Local Calendar

Regular Meetings can sometimes be held in physical locations. Remote options remain in place.

Go to the town's website for the meeting link.

SELECTBOARD:
Huntington: 1st & 3rd Mondays, 6:30 pm, Zoom meeting.
Richmond: 1st & 3rd Mondays, 6:30 pm, Town Center

SCHOOL BOARD:
MMMUSD: 1st & 3rd Mondays, 6:30 pm. Meetings will rotate among the MMMUSD schools. Check the website for specifics: www.cesu.k12.vt.us.

PLANNING COMMISSION
Huntington: 2nd & 4th Tues, 7 pm, Zoom meeting.
Richmond: 1st & 3rd Wed, 7 pm, Town Center

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
Huntington: 3rd Tues, 7 pm, when required. Zoom meeting.
Richmond: 2nd & 4th Wed, 7 pm, Town Center.

WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
Richmond: 1st Mon., Town Center

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Richmond: 2nd Tues, 7 pm, Town Ctr
Huntington: 2nd Thursday, 6:30 pm, Zoom.

RECREATION COMMITTEE
Richmond: 1st Tues, 7-9 pm, Town Center Mtg Room
Huntington: 1st Wed, 6 pm, Rec Field or Community Church.

RICHMOND TRAILS COMMITTEE Richmond: 3rd Tues, 7 pm, Town Center Meeting Room

RICHMOND LAND TRUST First Thursday. Monitor Barn Annex. All are welcome. Dan Martin, (4231).

TOWN HALL COMMITTEE
Huntington: 4th Thursday, 7 pm, Huntington Town Hall.

LIBRARY
Richmond: Trustees, 1st Thursday in January, March, April, June, September & November, 6:30 pm. 434-3036.
Huntington: Board of Trustees, days vary, Zoom meeting and Huntington Public Library, 434-4583.

HUNTINGTON ENERGY COMMITTEE 3rd Wed, 7 pm, Zoom meeting.

COMMUNITY GROUPS:
May Not be Meeting.
Call for information.

Hale and Hearty Seniors Club: 2nd Wed. Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 6 pm., Sept.-May.

HHCT (Huntington Historic and Community Trust): 1st Thurs, Huntington Public Library, 7:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

Howl Women's Land Monthly Business Meeting, 2nd Sunday of each month. 10 am. All women welcome 434-3953.

Richmond Drop-Off Center
Open all year Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 8-3:30. Located on Route 117 (80 Roger's Lane).

Worship

Call for information.

Community Church of Huntington: Sunday morning Worship & Sunday School, 9 am. Communion:1st Sunday. Senior Luncheon 3rd Tuesday (434-3155).

Richmond Congregational Church, United Church of Christ: 20 Church Street., 434-2053. Sunday Worship and Sunday School, 10 am.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church: Religious Education Classes: Sat. 9-10:15 am, CHMS, Richmond. Sacrament of Reconciliation: Sat. 3:15 pm. Masses: Sat.4 pm,Sun.8:30 am.

Community Alliance Church: 190 Pond Road (overlooking CVU), Hinesburg. Sunday, 9 am, Sunday school for all ages, with adults and teen electives; Scott Mansfield, 482-2132, www.hines burgcma.org

Jericho United Methodist Church: Rte. 15 in Jericho Corners. Sunday Worship and Church School 9 am winter and summer; Bible/Prayer Study Tues 7:30 pm. Rev. Kirk Thompson, 899-4288.

Jericho Congregational Church: on the green in Jericho Center Circle; Senior Pastor Dave Coons; Youth Paster Pete Anderson; Sunday services 10 am livestream on Facebook page. Sunday Youth Group: 6:15 pm. 899-4911 / www.jccvt.org

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church: 273 Vt Rte 15 (near Browns Trace) Jericho, 899-3932, Rev. Arnold Thomas, pastor. Worship Service: 9 am (nursery care provided), Sunday School & Bible Study: 10:30 am. www.goodshepherdjericho.org

Mount Mansfield Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship: 195 Vermont Route 15, Jericho, (the red barn across from Packard Road) 9:30 am services second and fourth Sunday (September to June). All are welcome.

Chittenden County History Grant Announcement

The Chittenden County Historical Society invites applications for its annual research grant. Grants up to $1,000 are available for research projects on some aspect of Chittenden County history. Grants may be made directly to individuals and do not require a sponsoring organization.

Past grants have supported new research on a wide area of subjects, and previous grantees have ranged from school children to college professors. The deadline for receipt of applications is June 1, and grants will be awarded at the Annual Meeting in July.

The easy application form is on the CCHS website, here: http://www.cchsvt.org/research-grants.html

—Jane Williamson,
CCHS Research Grants Committee

Selectboard

continued from page 7

There was discussion about whether to involve Vermont Land Trust (this project is probably too small) or Richmond Land Trust (there will be more discussion) and exactly what an easement should stipulate. Also, they discussed possible lengths of an easement (20 years? 50 years? 100 years?). This will be an ongoing discussion at future meetings.

Port-O-Potty at Browns Court I didn't realize how much I'd be reporting about Port-O-Potties, but this is the second consecutive column where the topic has come up. There are no Port-o-Potties in the town budget for Browns Court or Volunteer Green, but with both parks being used daily from now throughout the summer and fall, they are probably needed. No resolution was made, but the Board discussed maintenance, costs, and other issues with Port-o-Potties. Selectboard Chair David Sander threw out the idea that they should be looking at permanent solutions too.

Other Topics, Warrants, Purchase Orders, and Minutes Other topics discussed at this meeting included Mow 'N' Maintain as a grounds maintenance contractor, eclipse preparations (including closing Esplanade for the eclipse), policing and Hinesburg's coverage, and approval of the 2024 local emergency operations plan. Then members approved minutes from a previous meeting, reviewed purchase orders and warrants, voted to approve a starting pay rate for newly hired police officers, discussed agenda items for an upcoming meeting, and then adjourned this meeting.

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Bees Are In Trouble

Submitted By Diane Reynolds

Bees are dying off. How do we save them? Set up more backyard bee hives? No! Brooke Decker, state apiculturist with the Vermont Department of Agriculture laughs. "Keeping honeybees to save all pollinators is like keeping backyard chickens to save the endangered hermit thrush." In fact, backyard hives can worsen the problem. Honey bees and wild bees together face two very serious threats: habitat loss and pesticides. But wild bees alone face a grim third threat…the presence of the honey bees.

Habitat Loss Loss of flowering habitat to agriculture and commercial/residential development is widespread. Often, we can't stop this kind of transformation but we can mitigate the loss by planting flowering habitat anywhere

Leafcutter bee cutting big green leaf.

and everywhere possible. But the type of plant is crucial too. Wild native bees thrive in greater numbers where gardens are planted with native plants that offer a variety of blooms over all three blooming seasons.

Pesticides Both managed and wild bees are dying from pests and diseases more rapidly than ever. Curtis Mraz, third generation owner of Champlain Valley Apiaries says, "I now make a detailed plan every year for fighting this year's threats. My grandfather and great grandfather never had to do this."

So now we talk about pesticides. Mraz continues "Maybe it has nothing to do with any one parasite or disease. In the past, we've had tracheal mite which bees have overcome. We've had nosema. We've had American and European foul brood. Bees have fought all of them off by themselves." With healthy immune systems.

Honey bee on daisy.

What's new in the last 20 years is neonicotinoid pesticides. They destroy bee immune systems so bees can no longer fight off these parasites and diseases.

Mraz asks "So do we try to solve the varroa (a current deadly pest) for the bee or do you take away the chemicals so the bee can solve the varroa for the bee. Bees are sitting ducks for pesticides. We introduced agrochemicals, especially neonics, into our landscape. Bees are suffering in their ability to evolve out of this problem."

Dr Samantha Alger, UVM professor in the Plant and Social Science department, says, "People don't realize how incredibly sensitive bees, and all insects, are to very very low levels of pesticide exposure (i.e., parts per billion!)" Alger checked 61 pollen samples for neonics: 30% contained neonics with dozens of other pesticides also detected.

Almost all corn and soybean seeds sown in Vermont have been treated with neonics. Only a tiny percent of the pesticide stays in the plant tissue. Most leaches into the soil, into the waterways, into neighboring plants. It gets up into the nectar and the pollen. The bees feed on it. They bring it back to the hive/nest and feed it to their young. Neonicotinoids are now the most widely used insecticide and are found in hundreds of products: insect sprays, soil drenches, tree injections and veterinary ointments to control fleas in dogs and cats.

It's hard to kill a bug (veroa) on a bug (bee). Beekeepers use pesticides to do this! But the key word in beekeepers is keepers. Managed bees at least have keepers. No one is caring for the wild bees' exposure to veroa or any of the other pests and diseases.

Honey Bees: The Third Threat Honey bees cause trouble for wild bees through contamination and competition.

Both honey bees from poorly managed hives, and honey bees that have been trucked around the country, can cause the spread of disease. Bees from a hive with viruses/pests will carry the pathogens into the pollinating world. Trucked bees can get exposed to pathogens and bring them back to Vermont. Like sending a kid to daycare: kid gets exposed and sick and then you do, too.

Bees also compete for ever-shrinking habitat. Being generalist foragers, honey bees not only visit anything blooming, but also can cover much more acreage. When you think of the average hive size of 60,000 honey bees, it adds up to a lot of flying and gathering. Honey bees can be considered an invasive species in many habitats.

Bottom Line Honey bees are not in serious trouble. There are more honey bees in Vermont now than in the last 50 years. Their keepers ensure they are fed and warm and disease free. And replace colonies that die. Wild bees do not have such care. When we lose a native bee species, that's it. They're gone. The Vermont Center for Ecostudies says 55 of Vermont's native species urgently need protection.

Only two things will truly help bees, both wild and managed. Plant more native pollinator plants. And ban neonicotinoids.

Native pollinator plants have moved to the front of our awareness. Many websites publicize their importance and offer them for sale. Buy from a trusted source as many nursery plants are treated with neonics. Organic plants have not been treated.

Good news on neonicotinoids. Vermont bill H706, which begins to restrict neonics by 2029, is now in the Senate. The EU, Quebec, and New York, have banned neonicotinoids. Farmers report it's hard to find neonic-free seeds and worry pests will destroy crops. But, with New York's ban, seed makers will want their market: one million acres under cultivation. New York is large enough to drive the change to non-treated seeds and Vermont can piggyback on that.

As Maher says "The question is how long can we keep dumping poisons into our environment? It's just in an endless cycle of death for the bees."

(Diane Reynolds is a member of the Huntington Conservation Commission.)

Top Bee Plants – Do You Know Your 5?

The Vermont Pollinator Working Group has launched Know Your 5: the top five plants for bees that pollinate food crops for Vermont farmers (non-farmers can plant too!)

1. willow (shrub,tree) - early spring bloomer, feeds bumble, mason, mining
2. sumac (shrub) - blooms June, July, bees love them, stems for nesting too
3. meadowsweet (shrub) – blooms July - swarms with bees/wasps
4. sunflowers (plant) – blooms summer/fall, cut back to 4 feet for nests
5. goldenrods and asters (plant) – blooms fall

Food Crops Essential for Native Bee Pollinators: wild strawberries, brambles (raspberries, blackberries, black rasp-berries), apples, stone fruit (plum, cherry, peach, apricot), blueberries, winter squash/pumpkin/zucchini

Pollinator Planting Guidelines

Native insects need native plants. Sometimes native bees simply won't visit, or can't digest, newcomer/exotic plants. The ideal pollinator garden offers three-season blooming of native wildflowers. Xerces Society suggests:

1. Choose at least nine species of wildflowers (three spring, three summer, three fall)
2. Choose at least one native grass species for nesting sites and material
3. plant in swaths of eight of each species (four of grasses) for more efficient foraging.

So, that's a grand total of 9 X 8 + 4 = 76 plants! Don't fret if you lack the space/budget. Plant what you can and know you are part of the solution.

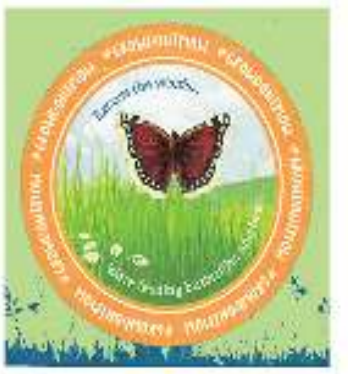
Sun/part sun plants need four or more hours direct sun. Shade/part shade are OK with four or less.

Soil test: squeeze small handful into a ball in your hand. If ball falls apart, it's dry, sandy, soil. If the ball holds, squeeze ribbon out between your thumb and forefinger. If ribbon holds, it's clay, wet soil. If the ribbon appears but breaks quickly, it's loamy soil. Loamy allows plants for both dry,-moist or moist-wet soils.

American Red Cross

GIVE BLOOD IN RICHMOND
June 5

SPRING



NO·MOW·MAY

There's a lot happening under your feet! Leave organic matter on your yard and wait till June to mow.

SUMMER

• RAISE MOWER BLADE TO 3"
• LEAVE THE CLIPPINGS

CONSIDER
Reducing lawn space
Increasing wild space

FALL

LEAVE·THE·LEAVES!

Wooly bear caterpillars and other small creatures burrow beneath fallen leaves to overwinter. Don't rake or blow away their cover!

WINTER

ORDER·YOUR·SEEDS!

Into the Woods

Five Techniques for Managing a Forest Efficiently

by Ethan Tapper

Some of my favorite forest managers are landowners, people who work on a small scale to make their forest a little heathier and more vibrant each year. While a thoughtful forest steward can have a truly positive relationship with their woods, the breadth of their impact is limited by their finite time and energy. Through using these five simple techniques, you can maximize the positive impact that you have on your forest.

1. Leave dead trees alone. Fallen trees, dead-standing trees and dead wood benefit wildlife habitat, soil health and fertility, carbon storage and forest hydrology, among other things. If the tree is dead, leave it alone! Be proactive, not reactive. Focus on cutting living trees, especially unhealthy trees, which are competing with healthier "crop trees."

2. Use the "crop tree release" method. Crop tree release is a shift in the way that we look at the forest. Instead of focusing on cutting all the trees that "need to go" (trees that are unhealthy, that have wounds or defects, trees of undesired species), we find our forest's healthiest, most promising trees and release them from competition individually. "Crop tree" is a bit of a misnomer. While a crop tree could be a tree that we're encouraging to produce a crop like maple sap, it can also be any healthy tree of almost any species. What makes crop tree release so efficient is that we only cut trees that are competing with our crop trees. If a tree isn't competing with a crop tree, leave it alone. To learn more about crop tree release, check out this video on my YouTube channel, or my article about it in Northern Woodlands magazine.

3. Get comfortable with cutting trees and leaving them on the ground. As you release your crop trees, you'll end up cutting trees that are smaller or that, for a variety of reasons, just aren't worth pulling out of the woods. Instead of taking the time to process these small trees into firewood, leave them on the ground and move on. This will be a more efficient use of your time, allowing you to release more crop trees and thus have a greater positive impact on your woods. This will also increase the amount of dead wood in your forest and its associated habitats and benefits. It's not a waste! These dead trees will be a real asset to the health and ecology of your forest.

4. Girdle some trees. "Girdling" a tree means creating two shallow, parallel cuts around its circumference, just deep enough to touch its wood. This severs the tree's cambium, eventually killing the tree and turning it into a "snag" (a dead-standing tree), which is another important habitat. I generally use girdling as a faster and safer method for killing trees that are competing with crop trees but are too dangerous to fell. Girdling will turn trees into hazards, so it's not a method to be used around your house or your recreational trails.

5. Get comfortable with "messiness." In working with hundreds of landowners, I find that nearly everyone's instincts tell them that a healthy, well-managed forest looks like a park with large, evenly-spaced trees and a clear, open understory. In fact, healthy forests are "messy," with trees of all different sizes and ages, dead trees, gaps in the canopy and tons of dead wood on the forest floor. "Cleaning-up" our forests – removing dead trees and dead wood, managing them to look like parks – is not just a waste of time, it actually makes our forests less healthy, less resilient, less rich with habitat. When you manage your forest, avoid piling brush or lopping-up trees and branches so that they lie flat on the ground. While they make your forest look neater, these practices actually diminish many of the benefits that these trees and tree tops offer to wildlife and forest ecology. If you can learn to appreciate the messiness, you'll see that not "cleaning-up" your forest will save you tons of time and energy, and make your forest healthier at the same time.

To learn more about these five techniques, watch a short video on my YouTube channel.

Courtesy hotoa cherry tree released using the crop tree release method.

(Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester for the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation. See what he's been up to, check out his YouTube channel, sign up for his eNews and read articles he's written at https://linktr.ee/ChittendenCountyForester.)

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Questions? Get answers! Chat with a senior volunteer from your town about it. Contact Martha (info above) to set it up.

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All Things Human

by Demaris Tisdale

Psychotherapy

"The new psychoanalytic method [is] ... somewhat subtle but irreplaceable, so fruitful has it proved to be in explaining obscure unconscious mental processes."

—Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

I didn't catch the name when she appeared on television Sunday evening. But when she declared, "We haven't made any progress since Freud, and now we have," I perked up. She announced that we don't need a real person to help us deal with our psychological needs. These needs can all be met using a device. The device can not only identify the patient's problems, but it can provide the needed help! And all of this is done remotely. Now we can avail ourselves of these modern advances.

She went on to declare that these devices can determine the mood of the person who is seeking help. This is done using artificial intelligence (AI) to diagnose a person's emotional problem. But not only can AI diagnose, it can determine the specific interventions that will solve the problem.

This person asserted that the AI device can display compassion, and can display this compassion to the person seeking help. This remarkable advance can supposedly provide cognitive behavioral therapy through telemedicine.

All of this is patently absurd.

My patient Sally happened to hear this news and at our next session, she told me this was "nonsense." She explained how important our contact is, even though since COVID we have had to continue our regular conversations by phone instead of in person. The insurance programs and companies, such as Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield, have recognized the necessity of providing mental health services to their subscribers.

Well I guess it was all for naught that I spent so many hours earning undergraduate and master's degrees so I can practice as a psychotherapist. Should this proposed AI process be adopted, and AI starts doing my job,then apparently I will no longer need to spend additional hours and money every two years to renew my license to practice in the State of Vermont.

The absurdity of the whole thing seems consistent with a lot of other missteps happening in our world.

It also reminded me of my early years as a clinical social worker. When I moved to Vermont, there was no such thing as licensure. Anyone could put out a sign and call themselves a social worker. A group of us got together and convinced the State that we needed to have standards of practice, just as other professions do. My license number is 231.

At the turn of the century, Time magazine addressed the question when they published their issue The Great Minds of the Century. The cover was a picture of Albert Einstein on the couch and Sigmund Freud sitting beside him taking notes. They noted the importance of the two geniuses. And in March 2006, Newsweek published their monthly issue with the full cover displaying Freud with his trademark cigar and declaring, "Freud is Not Dead."

We humans have a remarkable ability to fool ourselves. Examples of the mind playing tricks on itself are limitless. We believe what we want to believe and can believe what we are told if the person is persuasive enough. Some politicians have mastered the ability to convince great numbers of people that their lies are, in fact, true.

We humans also have a deep need to belong. We are pack animals and don't like to feel lonely and left out. It is part of the condition. We want to be part of the pack. If we've been hurt and experienced trauma, human connections are crucial. The contact with a real person, a living, breathing therapist, has proven to be a valuable part of successful treatment.

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