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Opposition Mounts. Citizens Launch Petition
Against New Town Manager. **Page 2**



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Citizens Launch Petition Against Hiring Of Controversial Town Manager

Selectmen Stand By Their Decision; Manager Responds

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The push-back was swift, but selectmen are standing by their decision.

On Friday, a day after they extended a conditional employment offer to a new town manager, a recent candidate for the Board of Selectmen launched an online petition that calls on selectmen Carrie Gendreau, Chad Stearns, and Roger Emerson to rescind their offer.

By Monday, that petition on change.org had more than 340 signatures toward a goal of 500.

Its creator, Chris Sweeney, a 2018 and 2021 selectmen's candidate, argues that James Gleason, the former city manager for Mascotte, Florida, is unfit to be the next town manager of Littleton.

On Monday afternoon, Gleason said it's unfortunate that some people are jumping to conclusions about him without knowing all the facts.

In the petition, Sweeney wrote that as a community Littleton has prospered through collaborative efforts, but very little in Gleason's public record suggests he has the capacity to pull people together and instead suggests "great division and combative behavior."

"Mr. Gleason's history of physical interaction, vicious language, and racial and discriminatory slurs and actions have led to numerous employee issues and claims, lawsuits, and his own arrest," wrote Sweeney. "This suggests a long road ahead on the path to collaborative leadership and does not represent the views of our community. Our economy is ascendant, primed and poised for great success coming out of the current pandemic ... We feel Mr. Gleason's leadership will stand in the way of that momentum."

Sweeney cites an August 2020 arrest in which Gleason was alleged to have made physical contact with a Mascotte city councilwoman who voted to not renew his city manager contract.

In the petition, Sweeney provides a link to a 1:12-minute cell phone video.

The video begins after a heated exchange and shows Gleason agitated and spewing profanity at councilwoman Brenda Brasher, but does not appear to show him touching the councilwoman or her husband, the former Mascotte fire chief.

During an interview with The Caledonian-Record on Thursday, Gleason, who called it "the worst night of my professional career," acknowledged he lost his cool and said things he shouldn't have said, but denied making physical contact with anyone.

The case, which alleged battery and disor-



This photograph showing prospective Littleton town manager James Gleason, during a heated exchange at an August 2020 Mascotte City Council meeting when he was city manager for Mascotte, Florida, was included in an online petition encouraging the Littleton Board of Selectmen to rescind their conditional town manager employment offer to Gleason. (Courtesy photo)

derly conduct, was dropped by Lake County, Florida prosecutors for insufficient evidence.

On Monday afternoon, Sweeney said the angle from the video makes it difficult to see definitive physical contact between Gleason and the councilwoman but said his interpretation of the video is that Gleason was within the range of physical assault.

As of Monday, Gleason referred to the city of Mascotte as "Trashcotte" on his LinkedIn page, a social media employment networking site.

"I made that in pun, based on a comment," said Gleason. "I guess I'll go and change that."

In his petition, Sweeney also cites a discrimination lawsuit filed against Gleason by Alana Wilson, an African-American woman and former Mascotte city employee who alleged that Gleason used racially-charged words during a workplace conversation.

Wilson's allegations were the basis of an Orlando Sentinel news story, a link to which Sweeney also included in the petition.

In the story, Gleason denied using some of the words Wilson alleged.

According to a WFTV-9 news story about a deposition video in the case, Gleason acknowledged using other words that were racially charged, but said he did so because he

wanted his co-workers to learn about racism.

On Friday, Gleason, who described himself left-of-center politically and a supporter of civil rights for all, told The Caledonian-Record that the October 2015 settlement between him and Wilson, the details of which are not public record, was settled with no guilt acknowledged on either side and with payment to Wilson, who agreed to end her employment with Mascotte.

When she was a city employee, he said he had conversations with Wilson following the 2012 shooting death of unarmed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, an African-American youth, about systemic discrimination in the United States and said his words were interpreted by Wilson in a manner he did not intend and he has since learned from the incident.

On Monday afternoon, Wilson's attorney in the case, Derek Schroth, of Eustis, Florida, told The Caledonian-Record record that Gleason's account of the conversation between him and Wilson is a "fair statement."

"I don't think he's a racist," said Schroth. "He did say some things that were not appropriate for the workplace."

Some witnesses during the conversation between Wilson and Gleason told attorneys that Gleason was trying to explain something regarding discrimination, said Schroth.

Brasher and Wilson could not be reached for comment by press time Monday.

Next Steps For Littleton

Littleton selectmen voted 3-0 to extend an employment offer to Gleason, 62, on the condition of completion of a standard background check.

Last week, Gendreau, the current chair of the Board of Selectmen, said the board is well aware of Gleason's arrest and lawsuit, but said he was upfront about them and answered the selectmen's questions.

The board, she said, fully vetted Gleason and concluded he was the best qualified out of all 14 town manager applicants based on his level of experience and abilities and his expressed commitment to wanting to serve Littleton.

Last week, Gleason, who is poised to succeed former Littleton Town Manager Andrew Dorsett, met with Littleton municipal employees and toured the town.

He said he doesn't plan to retire soon, but his goal is to make Littleton his last place of employment as town manager before retirement.

In a social media post on Monday morning, Sweeney encouraged residents to bring a sign to Board of Selectmen's meeting that

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Petition

Continued from Page 2

had been scheduled for 5 p.m. that evening at the Littleton Opera House, where he said residents intend to present the board with the petition.

On the town website, a notice was placed stating that the scheduled meeting for 5 p.m. was canceled on the advice of legal counsel.

On Monday afternoon, Gendreau said the meeting was canceled before she arrived at the town office that morning and the Board of Selectmen is not running from the questions and concerns some residents have but wants to first get a legal opinion from town counsel before publicly addressing questions and concerns.

Unless town counsel says otherwise, she said the board is standing behind its decision regarding Gleason.

“We very much believe that Jim Gleason is the man for the town,” said Gendreau.

Of the petition signatories, Sweeney said about 80 percent are Littleton residents, with the remainder Littleton business owners who don’t live in town, second homeowners, and other non-Littleton residents.

“I’m not doing this for me, I’m doing this for everyone here in town and it’s not anything other than that,” said Sweeney.

The next step is to get an appointment before selectmen at their next public meeting “to let them know how upset we are as a town,” he said.

Among the Littleton business owners sign-

ing the petition was Chutters candy store owner Jim Alden, of Franconia.

“We are very concerned,” said Alden. “We feel Littleton is a rising community ... [and] there is nothing in this candidate’s behavior that shows he is a fit. Looking at his history, it’s a very jarring history to see.”

In response to the petition, Gleason said, “It’s a free country and everybody has the right to express their opinion. It’s unfortunate that some people jump to conclusions without knowing all the facts ... It’s unfortunate that someone would take that action without even meeting me or calling or even asking. I know what’s out there [on the Internet] and I was open and honest with the board from the very first interview.”



The conditional employment offer by Littleton selectmen to James Gleason as Littleton’s next town manager has prompted some residents and non-residents to sign a petition encouraging selectmen to rescind their offer. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

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Obituaries

Paul A. Tetreault Sr.

Paul A. Tetreault Sr., 85, of Dartmouth College Highway, in North Haverhill, N.H., died unexpectedly on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at Cottage Hospital, Woodsville.

Paul was born on April 10, 1935 in North Stratford, N.H., the 10th of 11 children of Joseph and Odila (Couture) Tetreault. Following high school graduation, Paul attended New Mode Barber School in Nashua, N.H. He briefly returned to the North Country and worked at the veneer mill before



Paul Tetreault

relocating in Woodsville and working at the barber shop adjacent to Bagonzi's Restaurant. He eventually owned and operated Paul's Barber Shop next to the old Hovey's Shops and then at 83 Central St. On Oct. 26, 1957 he married Lorayne Simmons.

Paul served in the NH Army National Guard and was honorably discharged in September 1960.

He was a communicant of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Woodsville. From 1971 through 1982 he served as a representative on the NH State Barber Board, traveling throughout the state performing inspections and offering examinations to new barbers. When he wasn't barbering, he was pitching horseshoes. Paul was a local champion along with winning championships at the state, national, and even at the world level. He was also a great dancer.

He is survived by his four children, Paul A. Tetreault, Jr. and wife Pamela of North Haverhill, Teresa Puffer and husband Stephen of Woodsville, Marie Marvin and husband Bernie of South Berwick, Maine, and Stuart Tetreault and wife Mary Ann of North Haverhill; 11 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, and a great-great-grandson; a sister, Leona St. Cyr of Milford, N.H.; two brothers, Roland Tetreault and wife Jackie of Wilton, N.H. and Lawrence Tetreault and wife Diane of Inverness, Fla.; a brother in law, Ralph E. Simmons, Jr. and partner Clay Marshia of Waterbury, Vt.; along with nieces, nephews and cousins.

He was predeceased by his wife, Lorayne Tetreault on Aug. 24, 2008; two grandsons, Taylor and Timothy Tetreault on July 6, 2003; two sisters, Sister Mary Joanne Tetreault on June 29, 2020 and Rita Fournier on Oct. 3, 2020; three

brothers, Joseph "Tracy" Tetreault, Richard Tetreault and Raymond Tetreault on Nov. 28, 2020; and two siblings who died at a very young age.

Calling hours will be on Wednesday, March 24, from 6-7 p.m. at Ricker Funeral Home, 1 Birch St., Woodsville.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held privately.

Burial will be in the spring in Horsemeadow Cemetery, North Haverhill.

Memorial contributions may be made to Haverhill Little League, c/o Jen Paronto, 359 Woodward Road, North Haverhill, NH 03774.

For more information or to offer an online condolence, please visit www.rickerfh.com.

Ricker Funeral Home & Cremation Care of Woodsville is in charge of arrangements.

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Dozen
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Pineapple
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Lemons
2/\$1

32 oz • Organic
Imagine Broth
2/\$5

16.9 oz • Organic
While Supplies Last
Field Day Olive Oil
\$4.99

Organic Brussels Sprouts
\$2.99 Lb

While Supplies Last
Sugardale Butt Portion Hams
99¢ Lb

5 lb
Gold Medal Flour
2/\$4

6-10 oz
Nabisco Crackers
2/\$4

While Supplies Last
Bone-in Lamb Legs
\$7.99 Lb

Boar's Head Teriyaki Chicken
\$5.99 Lb

20 oz • White Tuscan or Sunflower
Jessica's Bread
\$2.39

16 oz
Land O'Lakes Butter Quarters
2/\$5

12 oz • Select Varieties
Shikai Shower Gels
\$4.99

7 oz
Sartori MontAmore
\$3.49

48 oz
Hood Ice Cream
2/\$5

10 oz
Stahlbush Island Farms Fruit
2/\$6

Organic • California-grown
Deglet Noor Pitted Dates
\$4.99 Lb

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News Briefs

Community VA Clinic Reinstating Full Services

LITTLETON — As vaccines roll out and virus numbers remain low, the Veterans Administration community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC), which this summer celebrates six years in Littleton, is reinstating full services and will re-implement some suspended programs.

“We are here and we are open for business,” Michael Stanley, physician and medical director for the Littleton CBOC, said Tuesday.

For a few months, services had been strictly by appointment and capacity was limited.

“We are more fully reopened as of March 1 and we are fully open for all appointments,” said Kathryn Cote, a Littleton-based Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) social worker with the VA.

The COVID-19 pandemic still requires that masks be worn in the building.

In recognizing a certain segment of those who served, the CBOC will also be welcoming Vietnam veterans on Monday, March 29, which is National Vietnam Veterans Day.

“We are recognizing all Vietnam Veterans and announcing to all that we are open to serve all your needs,” said Cote. “It is important that Vietnam veterans be honored.”

In the last few weeks, the Littleton CBOC has also hosted some vaccine clinics on-site, with more clinics possible.

“They’ve been set up as we get the vaccines,” said Cote. “We’ve done the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, two full days in the last two weeks.”

The CBOC also hosted a Moderna vaccine clinic at the Littleton Elks Lodge on March 3. The second injection for the Moderna vaccine is scheduled for March 31 at the lodge.

And to be restarted, in April or early May, is the veterans coffee group that launched four years ago.

“The coffee group serves two purposes,” said Cote. “One, it’s a place for veterans to communicate with each other about how being a veteran has impacted their life, and it also serves as a door, primarily as a way to teach veterans about all the services that they are eligible for. We have new veterans coming on board and this serves as a way to help them navigate the system.”

The group meets twice a month, on the first and third Friday.

“We are just going a step at a time and trying to get services fully back up,” said Cote.

“We’re looking forward to being able to start having the coffee groups and other meetings as the restrictions on COVID are removed,” said Stanley.

To provide a full VA health care model to keep care closer to home, the 10,000-square-foot Littleton CBOC opened in its new Cottage Street space in July 2015, replacing the smaller CBOC that opened on Meadow Street in 2009 after the veterans’ outpatient clinic at Littleton Regional Healthcare closed.

Group Has Standing To Appeal State’s Landfill Expansion Approval

The Waste Management Council has concluded that an environmental group has standing to appeal the state’s approval of the final phase of landfill expansion in Bethlehem and that landfill impacts, such as noise and odor, are direct impacts.

On Feb. 8, Bryan Gould and Morgan Tanafon, attorneys for Casella Waste Systems, filed a motion to dismiss the nonprofit Conservation Law Foundation’s appeal of an October 2020 decision by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to approve a permit for Casella’s Stage VI expansion at its landfill in Bethlehem.

Gould and Tanafon argued that CLF lacks legal standing to appeal because only one or two of its members have alleged direct harm and their allegations of noise, odor, traffic, and view impacts do not amount to direct and adverse injuries that can be anticipated to continue if the permit is approved.

But in a four-page rejection of the company’s argument that issued last week, David Conley, hearing officer for the state’s WMC, agreed with CLF that the group has standing to appeal, and that CLF can do so under New Hampshire RSA 21-O:14, 1-a, the administrative appeals statute.

Bethlehem residents Andrea Bryant and Peter Menard, who live near Casella’s landfill along Trudeau Road and are members of CLF, submitted sworn affidavits in support of CLF’s objection to Casella’s motion to dismiss, wrote Conley.

“Ms. Bryant states that she has been directly and adversely affected by ... noise and odor emanating from the landfill that have forced her to keep her windows closed even in summer,” he wrote in the Wednesday decision. “Moreover, she has a view of the landfill that negatively affects her enjoyment, use and the value of her property. If the permit is allowed to stand, she will continue to endure these adverse consequences. (Mr. Peter Menard ... who resides within two miles of the landfill, also submitted an affidavit under oath to the same effect).”

Contrary to Casella’s suggestion, there is no New Hampshire case law establishing that noise or odor are not direct and adverse injuries to the peaceful enjoyment of one’s property, wrote Conley.

“Nor is it mere speculation that the currently experienced negative effects of living near the landfill will continue in the future if the permit to expand the scope and extend the life of the landfill is implemented as now written,” he stated. “Here, living within sight and a mile or two of one of the largest landfill operations in the state can reasonably be presumed to be sufficiently proximate for standing purposes ... The alleged noxious odor, noise, and neg-

ative consequences to the members’ property stemming from operation of the landfill in its current state are not ‘generalized wrongs’ to the public at large.”

It is undetermined when the WMC will render a final decision on the appeal.

As it stands now, DES’s Oct. 9 permit approval allows Casella to dump nearly 1 million tons of waste in its landfill in Bethlehem to extend the landfill life to 2026, after which Casella hopes to have a new landfill operating beside Forest Lake State Park in Dalton.

The Dalton proposal, too, however, has met with opposition groups, among them CLF, which has sued the state at Merrimack Superior Court.

In that superior court case, CLF asks the court for an injunction prohibiting DES from issuing any permits for new or expanded landfills until the department updates its solid waste management plan.

On Jan. 21 at Grafton Superior Court, CLF filed suit against North Country Environmental Services, Casella’s New Hampshire subsidiary that runs the landfill in Bethlehem, and is asking the court to prohibit NCES from accepting waste for the Stage VI expansion until all of CLF’s appeal rights are exhausted at the state level.

CLF argues that Casella is preparing to accept waste for Stage VI beginning in April 2021.

As of Tuesday, the Grafton Superior Court case remained ongoing.

The VA entered into a long-term lease with Affordable Housing, Education and Development to occupy the space at 264 Cottage St.

“We serve all of northern New Hampshire and northern Vermont and all the way down to Plymouth,” said Cote. “Veterans come from all over.”

As book clubs, exercise programs, and other programs reopen in the future, a near-term goal is to have a monthly Veterans Corner, a place where veterans can see which services, groups, and activities are being offered, said Cote.

The plan is to also again have a representative from the New Hampshire service office visit the Littleton CBOC to help veterans sign up for service-connected benefits, said Cote.

CBOC services run the gamut, and more are planned.

“We have primary care, primary care mental health and we have physical therapy and audiology,” said Stanley. “We do lab work and send it down to White River Junction. We are beginning to work with sub-specialty services in terms of developing a schedule for them to have at least once a month face-to-face time available in the clinic, such as cardiology. We hope to expand that. We are also capable of working with veterans through video-medicine.”

The Littleton CBOC currently services some 2,100 area veterans.

“We are looking to get as many who are interested in coming,” said Stanley. “We want to

be known in the community and we want veterans to be able to get the best care they can get.”

SAU 36 To Relax Quarantine Guidelines

Quarantine rules are changing.

White Mountains Regional School District SAU 36 will no longer require students and staff to quarantine after out-of-state travel or classroom exposure.

The policy change was recommended by the state Department of Health and Human Services, as part of their updated COVID-19 guidance.

Lisa Miller, COVID coordinator for SAU 36, explained the new procedures during Monday’s school board meeting.

In accordance with DHHS, students and staff returning from out-of-state domestic travel will not have to quarantine, regardless of vaccination status, Miller said.

“It’s uncomfortable for me to allow unvaccinated students and staff to return to our buildings without a quarantine period, especially considering many are traveling to Florida during April break where the variants of concern are on the rise. But we have followed DHHS guidance throughout the school year and we’re going to continue to follow their lead,” Miller said.

In addition, students and staff will not be quarantined for classroom exposure, provided they are properly masked up and seated at least three feet apart.

Miller noted “This guidance applies only to controlled and monitored educational classroom settings. In other settings, DHHS will continue to recommend quarantine for people within six feet of someone with COVID-19 for 10 minutes or longer during their infectious period.”

The new DHHS guidance may allow the school district, which remains in hybrid learning mode, to increase students’ in-classroom learning time.

“Having spent the last year attempting to eliminate, or at least minimize risk, it certainly is a shift in thinking to be lifting quarantines and spacing students closer together. But we have added vaccinations to our list of mitigation measures. So the older folks, the vulnerable population, and front-line workers have all

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Snow groomers leave light trails in this long exposure photo of Cannon Mountain on Friday, March 19, 2021. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

State News

Latest School Funding Challenge Goes To Trial

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The New Hampshire Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an attempt by the state to dismiss the latest challenge in a decades-long debate over how to fund public schools, setting the case up for a trial to give school districts a chance to show how they need more financial resources.

In several landmark rulings in the 1990s, the court ruled that the state is required to provide and pay for an “adequate” education.

In response, the Legislature began sending each school district a set amount of aid per pupil — currently \$3,636 — but four districts in southwestern New Hampshire sued the state and the education commissioner in 2019, arguing the formula used to set that amount is unconstitutional because it doesn’t account for the real costs of transportation, teachers or facilities.

A judge agreed but declined to order the amount be nearly tripled as the plaintiffs requested, prompting both sides to appeal to the high court.

In addition to rejecting the state’s call for dismissal, the court also reversed the judge’s order saying the current funding method is unconstitutional as applied to the schools. The court said the judge was wrong to use information that came from legislative history and analysis in arriving at that decision.

The court also took note of the state’s argument that the source of information the school districts used in the case didn’t distinguish between costs necessary to deliver an adequate education and costs that fall outside of that.

“Although determining the components of an adequate education and their costs presents a mixed question of law and fact, as the parties’ briefs make clear, the underlying facts are vigorously disputed,” the court wrote.

The superintendents of the ConVal, Monadnock, Mascenic and Winchester school districts, in a joint statement, said they are “heartened” by the ruling.

“Education costs \$18,000 per student on average. No one could reasonably argue that \$3,636 per student will provide an adequate education,” they said.

“The Legislature, though under court order to repair its funding formula, has not done so,” they added. “This has shifted responsibility for education funding to the communities, whose residents have had to decide between education funding and rising property taxes. Inequities in taxation and funding now stretch across the state.”

Last year, a commission created by the Legislature concluded that the state should replace its current formula with one based on student outcomes such as assessment scores and graduation rates.

“Legislative efforts to improve public education should be measured by meaningful

improvements in student equity and the taxpayer equity that follows it,” state Rep. Dave Luneau, D-Hopkinton, said in a statement. “The clock has started for the state to replace the antiquated one-size-fits-all funding model and make sure every school district has access to the financial resources they need.”

Gov. Chris Sununu said the ruling “affirms that this is an issue that belongs in the Legislature and not in legal limbo.”

Senate Sets Aside Bill On Selling Rape Test Kits

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — A bill that would allow over-the-counter rape test kits to be sold in New Hampshire has been set aside for further work.

The bill would have repealed the state’s prohibition on the sale of kits used to collect evidence after sexual assaults. The Senate voted 14-10 on Thursday to send the bill back to its commerce committee.

Opponents of the measure said allowing such sales would exploit sexual assault victims’ fear and trauma and gives them false hope. Supporters said sending the bill back for further work would give commercial companies time to address the concerns raised by law enforcement and victims’ advocates.

Hassan Supports R&D Investment Bill

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire has helped introduce a bipartisan bill that would support research and development investments by innovative small businesses and startups.

Companies and startups investing in research and development can either claim a tax credit or fully deduct their investments, which helps them to invest in developing new products.

The American Innovation and Jobs Act would double the refundable research and development credit and extend it to more startups and small businesses. It also would preemptively reverse a change in a tax law that’s set to go into effect next year that would limit companies from fully deducting the investments each year.

“Providing support to startups and small businesses will help us jumpstart the economy and create jobs here in the U.S.,” Hassan, a Democrat, said in a statement last week. “Our bipartisan legislation would strengthen and expand R&D tax incentives, which will help drive innovation, promote economic recovery, and help U.S. businesses outcompete foreign manufacturers.”

Hassan and fellow members of the Senate Finance Committee introduced the bill. They include Republicans Todd Young of Indiana, Rob Portman of Ohio, and Ben Sasse of Nebraska, and Democrat Catherine Cortez Mas-

to of Nevada.

Republican Senate Kills Minimum Wage Bill

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — The latest effort to increase the minimum wage in New Hampshire has died in the state Senate.

New Hampshire currently doesn’t set its own minimum wage. Instead, the state follows the federal minimum which is \$7.25 per hour. The Republican-led Senate voted 14-10 along party lines Thursday to reject a bill that would have set the rate at \$10 per hour starting in January and then increased it to \$12 two years later.

Supporters called it a modest step toward supporting working families, attracting workers from other states and reducing the number of people seeking state assistance. Opponents said it would hurt young workers if businesses turned to automated checkout stations instead of hiring cashiers or could force some businesses to close altogether.

Democrats passed minimum wage bills the last two years when they controlled the Legislature, but the measures were vetoed by Republican Gov. Chris Sununu.

Maple Celebrations Return In Some States, With Precautions

Maple season is a time-honored tradition in the Northeast, when sap starts to flow in maple trees and is collected and boiled into syrup, with visitors coming to sugar houses to see the operations firsthand.

But the pandemic forced some states to cancel or postpone their annual sweet celebrations last year, and now some producers are welcoming back the public with safety precautions in place.

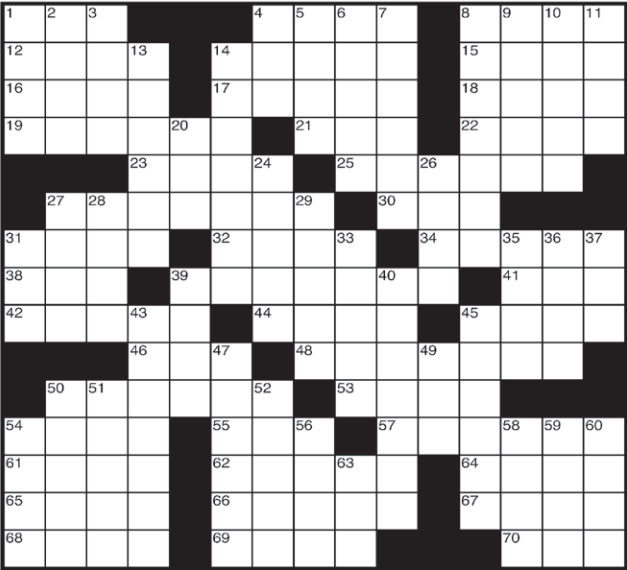
Maple weekends are happening Saturday and Sunday in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and Maine’s annual celebration is being held March 27-28 with precautions recommended by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. But those statewide events are off for a second year in a row in Vermont, the country’s top maple producer, and New York.

Maine Maple Sunday was postponed last spring, which was a disappointment for syrup producers, some of whom counted on it for 50% of their annual sales.

“It was a huge loss last year,” said Jo-Ann Merrifield, who said the event normally accounts for 75% of sales at Merrifield Farm in Gorham, Maine. That included valued added products like nuts and candy, in addition to syrup.

Her farm normally would have about 4,000 to 5,000 visitors over the weekend. This year, the event is scaled back. Gone are

- ACROSS
- 1 Junior reporter
- 4 Hot soak
- 8 “Primal Fear” star
- 12 Blast-furnace inputs
- 14 City in India
- 15 Thicke of “Growing Pains”
- 16 A law — itself
- 17 Igloo dweller
- 18 Desi loved her
- 19 Church readings
- 21 Co. honchos
- 22 Bright thought
- 23 Verdi masterpiece
- 25 Recovered
- 27 Praise
- 30 — Dawn Chong
- 31 Govern
- 32 Middle Eastern country
- 34 Plantain lily
- 38 Frat letter
- 39 Disagreeable
- 41 Acquired
- 42 Jane or Henry
- 44 Highlander
- 45 Diving position
- 46 And so on
- 48 Smallest Great Lake
- 50 Picked up on
- 53 Bone-dry
- 54 Fraud
- 55 Fix, as a boxing match
- 57 Dishwasher cycles
- 61 Leaning Tower town
- 62 Ham it up
- 64 Twilight
- 65 Affirm
- 66 Not in a whisper
- 67 Himalayan legend
- PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED
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had the opportunity to protect themselves with a very effective vaccine. So it may very well be time to get more students back into the building and shift some of our focus — not all of our focus — from infection control to academic recovery.”

Seventy-five percent of SAU 36 teachers and staff (179 out of 237) are fully vaccinated, or have started the vaccination process, Miller said.

In addition to growing staff immunity, the school district reported low COVID rates, with three active cases and a handful of precautionary quarantines. All schools remain open for hybrid learning.

SPRING SPORTS

North Country athletic directors have agreed that spring sports participants will wear masks.

Following a meeting on Monday, the ADs decided that players and coaches will be masked at all times, despite being outdoors.

“The NHIAA strongly recommends that teams wear masks,” said WMR athletic director Kerry Brady. “And, also, it will be mandated that teams wear masks in tournament play. So we felt as though if we’re going to be wearing them in tournament play, we should also be wearing them during the regular season as well.”

That applies to baseball, softball, tennis and track and field. Exceptions will be made for certain track events, such as pole vault, for safety reasons.

White Mountains Regional High School’s baseball, softball and tennis teams will compete against North Country opponents, in order to limit travel during COVID. Track and field will face mostly regional opponents, with the exceptions of meets at Moultonborough and Kearsage (pole vaulters only).

Fans will be required to wear masks in the immediate vicinity of the playing fields.

“There will be mask zones,” Brady said. “If you’re standing out by your car on the side of the road to watch a softball game, I’m not going to be going up there and policing that area. I’m going to be policing the area right along our fields.”

Spring sports practices begin on March 29.

IN-PERSON MEETINGS

The School Board will resume in-person meetings on April 5. Meetings will be held in the high school auditorium, to allow for social distance and airflow. Attendees will be required to wear masks.

The meetings will continue to be broadcast online, to accommodate those unwilling or unable to attend due to COVID risks, including school staff and board members.

REORGANIZATION

Greg Odell of Dalton was named the new School Board chair. He replaces Jessica Loiacono of Whitefield, who did not seek re-election. James Brady of Jefferson was selected as vice-chair.

PRINCIPAL'S PODCAST

WMRHS principal Jacob Hess has launched a podcast, The Principal’s Podcast, featuring high school students and staff. Three episodes have been released, with more to come. They can be found at anchor.fm/white-mountains-regional.

“I’m really looking forward to getting some community involvement with that and doing some interviews with community members. Really bringing the community into the building and bringing the building out to the community a little bit more,” Hess said.

COVID RELIEF FUNDS

SAU 36 has been awarded \$2.2 million through the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II (ESSER II) program.

Plans for those funds are in development.

School board member Kristen Van Bergen of Lancaster noted “I just want to be mindful ... that if there’s an opportunity to pay that forward to taxpayers that would be good

ESSER II funds were awarded through the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan.

Superior Court: Dalton Man Pleads Guilty To Criminal Threat With Gun

A Dalton man with a lengthy criminal history has pleaded guilty to an August shooting incident involving his former tenant whom he told police he would shoot if he doesn’t leave the property.

During a plea and sentencing hearing Tuesday at Coos Superior Court, Clayton E. Herbert III, 65, pleaded guilty to a Class B felony count of criminal threatening with a deadly weapon.

In October, Herbert indicted by a grand jury on that charge as well as on a Class B felony count of reckless conduct with a deadly weapon.

Each count carried a maximum New Hampshire State Prison sentence of 3 1/2 to 7 years, but in exchange for Herbert’s plea, the prosecutor dismissed the charge of reckless conduct and gave Herbert a 12-month sentence in the Coos County House of Corrections, all of which is suspended on condition of three years of good behavior.

A total fine of \$620 was also suspended for three years of good behavior.

The sentence requires Herbert to complete any counseling, treatment, or educational programs.

On Aug. 23 at his residence in Dalton, prosecutors said Herbert placed Cody Larcomb, 27, in danger of serious bodily injury when he fired a pistol beside a camper where Larcomb was standing.

Herbert had called police dispatch at a few minutes past noon that day to say he had allowed Larcomb to live in a camper on his property at 536 Forest Lake Road, but now wanted him gone, NHSP Trooper Sean McCarthy wrote in the affidavit for arrest.

Herbert told dispatch, “If the kid doesn’t leave, I’m going to shoot him,” wrote McCarthy.

McCarthy said he responded to the residence and found Herbert armed with a concealed .45-caliber pistol and one round missing from the magazine.

Herbert admitted to shooting off one round “into his pit” while standing on his house deck facing the camper, said McCarthy.

The pit is right beside the camper.

According to court documents, Herbert, in speaking with McCarthy, agreed that firing the gun was dangerous.

Larcomb told the state trooper that he was standing outside the camper when Herbert, from his deck, pointed the gun at him then shot into the pit after verbally threatening him.

“Herbert had asked him about money owed to him prior to this and was scared he would shoot him,” wrote McCarthy. “Larcomb clarified that when the gun was pointed at him, he

had immediate fear that he was going to shoot or kill him.”

McCarthy said he found a spent .45-caliber casing near the porch where Hebert admitted he fired the gun.

“Herbert lives in a residential neighborhood with another house to the rear of where he shot,” McCarthy said in the affidavit. “There were vehicles driving by, foot traffic and children across from the house while I was there.”

According to records, Herbert has 33 previous criminal cases in the court system.

114th LRH Annual Meeting Highlights COVID Challenges, Successes

LITTLETON — The COVID-19 pandemic threw financial and other challenges at Littleton Regional Healthcare, but hospital officials, during LRH’s 114th annual meeting, spoke of how LRH overcame the hurdles and what lay in store for the future.

In its more than a century of holding annual meetings, number 114 was a first — pre-recorded and released on video.

“2020 was a year that presented us with challenges unlike anything we’ve encountered in our long history,” said LRH President and CEO Bob Nutter. “But with your support and the hard work and dedication of our staff, we overcame every obstacle COVID-19 presented. I’m beyond proud to work alongside the health care professionals at LRH. I thank the management team that navigated through this past year. With their leadership and our unbelievable staff, we proved just how resilient and capable we are. This past year required us to think outside of the box and develop some new and innovative ways of doing things. This meeting is a perfect example.”

Jeff Woodward, the incoming chairman of LRH’s volunteer board of trustees, thanked outgoing chairman Roger Gingue and said he looks forward in the year to come to build on the great work and achievements accomplished.

“We are still strong and mission-driven and thinking about our future,” said Woodward. “This time last year, we presented several strategic projects that were underway. While several of those projects are on hold, we remain optimistic about the opportunities for growth in the new year.”

Outgoing board treasurer and incoming board vice-chair Erin Hennessey presented the financials, which for a time were in a climate of uncertainty.

“Given the pandemic challenges that the hospital faced for most of the fiscal year, our financial results are not as bleak as originally projected,” said Hennessey. “This was all due to our staff that worked tirelessly to resume surgical services that were originally postponed due to COVID-19.”

The operating margin ended the year \$6 million less than originally budgeted for, and it came in \$4 million in the red.

Gross revenues were \$179 million, net revenues \$87 million, and total patient visits 136,000.

Early in the pandemic, the hospital began seeing a drop in billing and net revenue, but that began to come back slightly in May, she said.

By August, the hospital was back to its normal budget projects, and even slightly higher, and has been able to keep up with its budget ever since, said Hennessey.

Because of the pandemic, there was a 7-percent reduction in total LRH staff, from 557 in 2019 to 518 in 2020, though medical staff increased from 262 to 266, a 1.5-percent increase.

“Those who serve Littleton patients are professional and caring and compassionate,” she said. “Littleton Regional Healthcare is proud to be the largest employer in the area and of our commitment to our patients, regardless of their ability to pay.”

Despite the challenges, LRH in 2020 committed \$4.6 million in community benefits and charitable health care, along with programs and services for patients and their families in LRH communities.

Ed Duffy, LRH medical director, updated the community on

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the hospital’s response to the pandemic, beginning in January 2020 when a patient transported to LRH who was thought to have the virus ended up being one of the first COVID-19 patients in the state.

By February 2020, LRH had set up an incident command with rapid response to daily situations and soon implemented source control within the building to reduce transmission and keep healthy patients away from sick ones.

It also increased surge capacity and ICU beds and regular beds (all with oxygen and monitoring) in the event of a spike in virus cases.

And tested in the last year have been more than 13,000 community members.

“Here we are a year later and we’ve come a long way,” said Duffy.

Current safety protocols at LRH and elsewhere are expected to remain in effect until at least the summer, he said.

“Only when get more vaccine into people’s arms will we be able to return to more normal activity, and we look forward to that time,” said Duffy.

Playing a key role in coordinating LRH’s vaccination clinics, the first one of which began for hospital staff in mid-December, is Koren Superchi, chief nursing officer and vice-president of LRH’s patient care services.

While other hospitals had two-thirds of their staff committing to being vaccinated, LRH ended up having 80 percent, she said.

Community members in phase 1b have been getting their vaccine for the last several weeks and Littleton area teachers in 2a began receiving their first shot on Friday.

“We are looking forward to moving on to the next phases of vaccine distribution,” said Superchi. “LRH plans to continue with our vaccine clinics for as long as the state needs us ... Herd immunity is 80 percent of the residents in New Hampshire vaccinated. We are hoping to have community-wide vaccination by late spring or early summer ... I think the vaccine distribution is a ray of hope for some normalcy very soon.”

In closing, Nutter thanked LRH staff, who have been on the “front lines” all year and are “healthcare heroes,” and the individuals and businesses who extended support in the last year, from donations of personal protective equipment to expressions of gratitude to front-line workers.

“We appreciate the outpouring of community support,” he said. “We are thrilled the vaccine distribution is underway and are optimistic that everyone who wishes to receive the vaccine will have the opportunity in the coming months. I personally look forward to the day when we can bring back our wonderful volunteers and see you wall in the hallways of LRH.”

Woodsville On The Hook For Fire Department Budget

The Town of Haverhill will not fund the Woodsville Fire Department this year.

Taxpayers in the Woodsville precinct will bear the full cost of the department, which had a 2020 operating budget of \$132,200.

As a result, the Woodsville property tax rate will increase approximately \$1.52 per \$1,000, according to precinct officials.

Town Manager Brigitte Codling explained that Haverhill cannot fund Woodsville Fire until it joins a newly-formed town fire department.

Plans to merge three district departments (North Haverhill, Haverhill Corner and Woodsville) into a single town fire department were approved by 2020 Town Meeting.

Two precincts have already agreed to join (North Haverhill and Haverhill Corner). Woodsville has opposed the measure.

Even if they wanted to, Woodsville cannot join the town department this year because Town Meeting voters this month re-

jected Article 2, which was needed to consider over 30 other articles, including fire department funding.

“The failure of the 2021 warrant means that the Town cannot consider accepting in 2021 the Woodsville Fire Department as a station of the Town Fire Department, ‘no means no,’” said Codling, adding, “The Select Board voted to only fund the Town’s Fire Department moving forward due to the legal advice we received.”

Codling provided legal opinions that supported the Select Board’s decision to only fund the town fire department.

In a letter dated Feb. 26, law firm Drummond Woodsum of Manchester stated that the Woodsville Fire District is “a separate and distinct municipality from the Town” and that the purpose of a district is “to allow a smaller group of residents to manage their own needs by removing some power from the existing municipality.”

The legal opinion continued that “Woodsville wants the independent power to operate its own fire department, without accountability to Town voters, yet it wants the Town taxpayers, the majority of whom are not Woodsville residents, to fund it” and concluded that “so long as Woodsville desires to retain its own independent power to operate fire service within its borders, it bears the responsibility to fund the same.”

That opinion was supported by the New Hampshire Municipal Association, which stated that town and precinct governments were separate entities, and that “it would be improper for one municipality to fund an activity which may only benefit the citizens of another municipality.”

In response to the town’s decision to withhold funding, Woodsville commissioners on Tuesday voted to limit the fire department’s services to the precinct, according to Precinct Administrator Kevin Shelton.

They will remain a mutual aid agency, and will respond to calls in surrounding areas (including the rest of Haverhill) if additional manpower be needed.

“They’ll get toned out if the fire is bad enough,” Shelton said.

Shelton said the Woodsville Precinct will consider the fire department merger at its annual meeting on Wednesday, despite stated opposition to the proposal by Woodsville Fire staff and the precinct commissioners.

Even if they approve a merger, they would not be eligible to join the town fire department until 2022, due to the Town Meeting vote.

Bethlehem Mulling Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

As some North Country towns look at installing electric vehicle charging stations or already have installed them, the town of Bethlehem is considering its options, which include possible sponsorships by local businesses.

To be determined will be who will pay for a charging station and how much it could cost the town in electricity.

During this week’s Board of Selectmen’s meeting, Selectman Bruce Caplain said he’s been in contact with three companies that laid out several options.

“There’s a couple of different systems out there,” he said. “There’s Level 1 systems, super-fast chargers, but also super-expensive. All three companies said that’s probably not the way you want to go right away. They are probably \$30,000, and then the electrical usage and electrical connections are also difficult and expensive.”

They suggested instead, he said, Level 2 systems, of which there are two types, one being a simple drive-up system that allows a driver to plug in for theoretically as long as he or she wants.

“There’s no limit and they’re not paying for it and the town would pay for it,” said Caplain. “If it runs on solar, it would cost very little to nothing at that point. They suggested signs and a two-hour limit.”

The second Level 2 system comes with software that would

allow the town to charge people a fee for a charge.

Two ports and a pedestal would cost about \$3,000 to install. The software EV charging station would cost about \$5,000 and carry an annual \$500 software fee.

The recommendation for Bethlehem is to begin with four ports and two pedestals.

The biggest expense would be digging a trench and running a line to the pedestals, but one company said if the town public works department can do that work, it would save a lot of money, said Caplain.

The companies recommend the town put the chargers on all the popular EV charging apps and have them charge at a rate of about 25-miles-per-hour, a standard way to charge that would invite people to town so they could grab a beer or a meal and two hours later be ready to go, he said.

The suggestion was for a high-visibility area, like around town hall or 42 Maple Arts Gallery, and also to pay a small cost to install signs on the highway informing EV drivers of charging stations in Bethlehem.

Sometimes there is grant funding for towns to install stations and sometimes there isn’t, and right now there isn’t, said Caplain.

“They expect some bills will pass that will fund something like this,” he said.

Another option is to put an article on the March 2022 town meeting warrant.

Another is to enlist support from local businesses and have wording that a charging station is sponsored by a local business, such as Rek-Lis Brewery, and have signs indicating where that sponsoring business is located.

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CLOSE TO HOME

Hello, Spring

As anyone who reads this column even occasionally knows, I love winter. When others are lamenting the arrival of cold and snow in December – and its continuation after the winter holidays and beyond – I am hoping for more snow and enough cold to sustain good skiing.

After the stretch of warm, sunny days we had last week and into this one, though, it's hard not to look forward to spring.

Last weekend featured two bluebird days on the mountain. Sunday afternoon, after exploring some of Cannon's finer spots for skiing and sightseeing with the group of 6- and 7-year-olds I help coach, I met up with my own kids and enjoyed the rare occasion of skiing with all three of them. (Yes, they now have to wait for Mom at the bottom most runs.) It was so warm that I stripped down to a t-shirt and vest. We eschewed the most crowded places on the mountain for long, sunny chairlift rides and laps of turning through perfectly soft, not-quite-slushy snow.

Once home, the kids swapped ski duds for shorts. There was front porch sitting and passing of the football, as well as their recent favorite driveway game – while they wait for the yard to melt out – wall ball off the last big snowbank in the shady (and muddy) corner of the driveway. We checked out the spiky shoots of the crocuses poking through the barely thawed dirt of the window garden, and we're keeping an eye on the front garden, where we planted bulbs between the perennials last fall.



BY MEGHAN
MCCARTHY MCPHAUL

Even the dog, who embraces just about any kind of weather, has seemed happier than usual outside. She's taken to lying in her favorite warm weather spots again and looks at us mournfully when we suggest it's time to come in. If there's sun to lie in, mud to get messy in, and a few remnant patches of snow for blissful rolling, she is a happy girl.

We weren't, of course, the only ones soaking in the early spring goodness. Baseloche restrictions this year have brought the ski area tailgating game to a whole new level, and every parking lot at the mountain boasted mini grills, chairs and tables set up next to truck beds, and folks enjoying a variety of beverages. On the short drive home, we saw three bicyclists pedaling away, seemingly oblivious to the months-long pileup of road salt and sand along the road edges. People were out doing yard work or playing in the park or gathering with neighbors in driveways.

I've been around long enough to know that a couple of nice weeks in March does not mean spring is really here. I'm certain it will snow again before we get through April – probably the day after the snow tires come off my car. In the meantime, I'll take all the t-shirt-skiing, front-porch-sitting, early-blooming-flowers, and gathering-together-in-the-sun days that come my way.

Meghan McCarthy McPhaul is assistant editor for Northern Woodlands and a former staff reporter for the Caledonian-Record.

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"This would benefit local businesses and I think we can do some sponsorships," said Board of Selectmen Chairman Gabe Boisseau.

He asked if charging a fee would deter EV visitors from going to Bethlehem or if it's like putting gas in the tank and people will pay.

"I think you'll find both," said Caplain, who noted Littleton and its first municipally-owned EV charging station that was installed in January and charges a small fee.

On the Bethlehem town meeting warrant is an article asking voters to approve a solar array for public buildings.

If it gets voter approval, Caplain said it will cost the town very little for EV charge-ups because electricity costs would decrease dramatically.

Selectmen agreed to hold off on choosing an EV charging station option until the town vote because if the solar project is approved, it will change the EV project and its costs.

"It also gives us time to see if the feds will do anything as far as funding charging stations," said Selectman Chris Jensen. "I'm not wildly enthusiastic about spending town money, to be honest ... We can also keep an eye out for grant opportunities."

Littleton School District: Challenging Times Call For Revamped Summer School

LITTLETON — In the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic, which at times required schools to adopt all-remote learning or hybrid learning (remote mixed with two days of traditional classroom time), has made education even more of a challenge.

To meet it, some principals are advancing plans to restructure summer school to address wider-than-normal learning gaps and students who have fallen behind and prepare them for the 2021-2022 school year.

One such school is the K-6 Lakeway Elementary School, which this week presented its plan to the Littleton School Board.

"It's been a year of challenges and we want to do as much as we possibly can this summer to increase their achievement levels as they go into the fall," said Littleton School District SAU 84 Superintendent William Hart.

Traditionally, summer school has been for identified students and a small group of non-identified students at risk, said LES Principal Crystal Martin.

"There are a lot of thematic elements to maintain their skills so they don't get what teachers call the 'summer slide,'" she said.

Historically, retention has been the focus of summer school.

But not so much for 2021.

"There would be some cases where that would be appropriate, but realistically what we're looking at doing is accelerating their learning and accelerating the closing of learning gaps," said Martin. "It's not a catch-up mentality, it's moving them forward as quickly

as we can to get them back on track."

The focus will be more on individualized and strategic interventions based on student needs, and data will be used from classroom assessments to determine which interventions students need.

The residual effect of the pandemic is that all students have had an impact on their ability to access the same curriculum, instruction, and assessment that they would have in a traditional school year, she said.

"Obviously, identified students qualify ... [and] they would be the first consideration, but we would certainly be extending this to students at risk or students that were more significantly impacted by the pandemic and learning opportunities during that time," said Martin.

The plan, which was backed unanimously by the five-member school board, would call for a decrease in the size of groups to an ideal ratio of one teacher for six students.

"The reason for that is we are really focusing on individualized interventions rather than group and thematic units that are grade-level specific," said Martin. "We really want to drill down into what the individual students need and how we can move them forward and how to do that as quickly as possible."

In the past, the pay rate per teacher per summer has been \$1,800.

The board agreed to Martin's proposal for a total \$3,000 teacher pay rate and a \$1,500 rate for para-professionals, with the extra money constituting a "COVID stipend" that will come from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The additional \$1,200 for teachers would come from CARES Act money and the balance from what is already budgeted in the summer school budget.

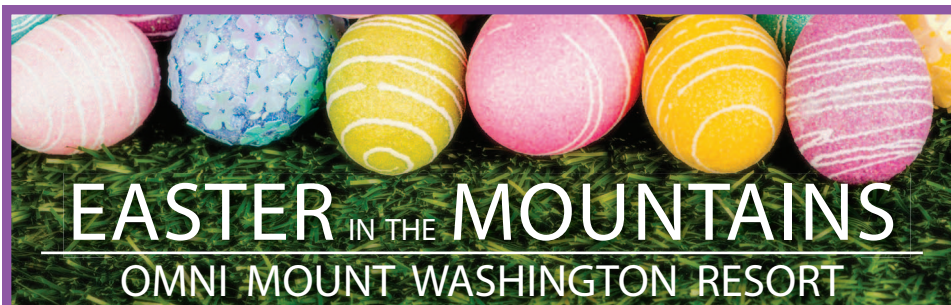
"Given the times and given COVID and given teacher burnout, Kelly [Noland, director of student services] and I are aware that staffing summer school is going to be a challenge this year," said Martin. "Last year, it was remote and it was a significant challenge to staff the program. This year, we are expecting that we will be on campus with many of the protocols that we have now still in place."

The summer school program is for the month of July, four days a week and three hours a day for students, with teachers getting paid for four hours a day that includes a half-hour added to either end, as well as a day for preparation and planning and a day for cleanup and pack-up.

"The rationale here is we really need to address the learning gaps," said Martin. "Many students have them, but some are significantly impacted more so. We are also making a recommendation that over the next two years we increase the amount that we devote to summer school programming, half of it in the first year and half of it in the second year, while we still have COVID money. But by the end of that COVID money, we'd like to maintain this level of programming and service in the summer."

In an average summer, about 80 LES students participate, a number that Martin expects to be higher this summer than in the past given the circumstances.

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Martin and Noland estimate that 17 to 18 teachers and 10 to 11 paras will be needed, though that number remains a bit of a moving target until final student enrollment numbers are set.

Summer school absorbs some incoming kindergartners and its participating sixth-grade students attend at Daisy Bronson Middle School or Littleton Academy.

School Board Member Larry Blaisdell was supportive of both the teacher pay increase, saying it's probably the best use of the CARES Act money, and the summer school plan, which he said provides a great opportunity to support students.

County Fairs Optimistic About Return

Last year COVID-19 wiped out the county fair schedule. Now, those events are back on.

Amid predictions of a "close to normal" summer, organizers of fairs in Vermont and New Hampshire are cautiously optimistic that the Ferris wheels and fried dough, livestock and live entertainment, will return in 2021.

Dick Lawrence, President of the Caledonia County Fair, said continued vaccinations and increased public confidence should allow the fair to move forward, and hold a belated 175th-anniversary celebration.

The Caledonia County Fair is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 25 to 29.

"That doesn't mean that things can't change in a hurry. But we are planning to have a fair," Lawrence said. "And if we can't have a fair, we will have activities as close to the fair date as we can."

According to Lawrence, entertainment has already been booked. Concession contracts are "ready to go," and will be delivered once the fair status is confirmed. Other details are forthcoming, he said.

His confidence is backed by top elected leaders. President Joe Biden and Govs. Phil Scott of Vermont and Chris Sununu of New Hampshire have expressed hope that the summer could look more like it did in 2019.

Referring to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, Lawrence expected "there will be flies in the ointment."

He said Caledonia County Fair directors have prepared contingency plans in the event one-way pedestrian traffic, social distance, or other safety measures are required.

"We've discussed every possibility," he said. "Hopefully, Lord willing, we'll have an event, and people will be ready to come to an event."

The Lancaster Fair, scheduled for Sept. 2 to 6, and the Orleans County Fair, moved to Sept. 8 to 12 (due to amusement scheduling issues), are also expected to proceed as planned.

Jason Sicard, President of the Orleans County Fair, and Ed Samson, President of the Lancaster Fair, said fairs and festivals will repair the community fabric, which was frayed by COVID separation and isolation.

"I think everybody in the community needs a chance to meet and greet, to spend time together and talk to each other. That's what fairs have done for over a hundred years," Sicard said.

Added Samson, "[The Lancaster Fair] draws people from far and wide. It's like old home day"

The fairs will provide a much-needed boost to local economies, which were battered by COVID, and to the fair organizations, which went a year without income.

"We suffered significant losses and we had zero revenue [in 2020]. We couldn't even have a horse show. Another year and a lot of fairs would no longer exist," Samson said.

Lawrence echoed that concern.

He said the Caledonia County Fair faced \$45,000 in yearly expenses to keep its Lyndonville fairgrounds insured, maintained, and served by water, sewer and electric utilities.

He also worried about volunteer enthusiasm if the fair were

canceled for a second straight year. He noted that the Caledonia County Fair was put on by 36 unpaid volunteers.

"People that belong to an organization and are supportive of it, if there's nothing to do, they lose their enthusiasm ... and put in their time somewhere else," he said.

However, Lawrence was confident in his team.

"We do it for the love of the fair. And we love working together," he said, noting that while fair organizations elsewhere "are struggling to get a quorum to have a meeting, we've never had that problem."

Representatives of the North Haverhill Fair and Bradford Fair could not be reached for comment.

According to event websites, the North Haverhill Fair is scheduled for July 28 to Aug. 1 and Bradford Fair is slated for July 15 to 18.

White Mountains SAU 35 Awarded \$1 Million Mental Health Grant

As North Country school districts place a greater focus on socio-emotional learning and positive mental health, one school administrative unit just got a boost through a \$1 million federal grant to help build out more services and better outreach to its students and their families.

White Mountains SAU 35, which includes the K-12 Lisbon Regional School, K-6 Bethlehem Elementary School, 7-12 Profile School in Bethlehem, the K-6 Lafayette Regional School, and the K-3 Landaff Blue School, was one of only a handful of SAUs in New Hampshire awarded a New Hampshire Department of Education Systems of Care grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The \$1 million grant will be used during the next four years.

The opportunity will enable SAU 35 to focus on improving the mental health outcomes for the SAU's children and youth, from birth through age 21, and their families, by supporting a sustainable infrastructure and services that are required as part of the federal Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and their Families Program, also known as the Children's Mental Health Initiative.

SAU 35 district leaders are looking forward to the implementation, expansion and integration of the CMHI approach, among them Jennifer Watson, director of student services for SAU 35, who will serve as the project manager.

"SAU 35 is thrilled to get started on this grant," she said Wednesday. "It's a tremendous opportunity to reach out to students and families."

For the last 18 years, Watson has worked with youth and families in both the private and public school sectors, as well as with community members who are at-risk for adverse mental health issues.

Watson also serves on the advisory committee for the North Country Partnership for Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Practices and is about to join the advisory committee of the New Hampshire Multi-Tiered System of Support of Behavioral Health and Wellness Model.

"She is a compassionate and enthusiastic administrator who brings a wealth of knowledge to this position," SAU 35 officials said in a statement. "Through her professional experience, Jennifer has learned the true benefits of good communication, a collaborative work environment, and a universal input process where decision-makers are equipped with contributions from a diverse group of professionals."

Some SAU 35 schools, in building their own socio-emotional learning programs, already paved the way for the state recognizing SAU 35 and awarding it the new SAU-wide Systems of Care grant, a first-of-its-kind grant for all of SAU 35's schools.

In 2017, BES received a three-year \$50,000 trauma-sensitive school GROW grant (Generating Resilience, Outcomes, and Wellness).

More recently, LRS was awarded a Project Futures grant to

support behavioral health and wellness.

"It's really a tremendous opportunity for SAU 35 to be able to reach out to students and their families from a mental health perspective, which we hadn't been able to do in this capacity," said Watson.

The money will allow the SAU to do more in areas of training staff for the mental health of students and which tools and strategies they can implement in the classroom, and will allow opportunities for seminars and speakers, expand the family component, boost social worker positions, and increase existing collaborations with local mental health agencies, among them Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, which works with SAU 35 to provide counseling for students, she said.

Good mental and behavioral health starts in the home, and today's students face different challenges than students of yesteryear, and today's schools see a greater need for programs and services, said Watson.

"What students are dealing with these days is not the same as 20 or 30 years ago," she said. "We have several factors that play into it — the economy, the opioid crisis, and now COVID."

In recent years, many schools have reported higher rates of student depression, anxiety, thoughts of self-harm, and other mental health issues.

The pandemic presents an opportunity to work with students and families in need more than in the past, and also to more comprehensively educate teachers, students and families, said Watson.

See **News Briefs**, Page 13

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Details Slowly Materialize On Federal COVID Relief Funds

BY KATHERINE FIEGENBAUM
Staff Writer

\$1.9 trillion, the amount detailed in the recent COVID-19 legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, is a lot of money.

And it's headed in a lot of different directions: states, counties, towns, schools ... and likely your bank account.

While many eligible North Country residents are already seeing \$1,400 checks hit their bank accounts as part of the American Rescue Plan, other official aid figures are trickling out.

On Wednesday, as First Lady Jill Biden visited a Concord school to promote the funding, the New Hampshire congressional delegation announced \$350.5 million in funding for N.H. schools. These funds, to be distributed to schools by the state, aim to help them safely reopen and support students.

Portions of that \$1.9 trillion will be also be distributed to each N.H. town and county, as well as the state itself.

Exact amounts, timing and eligible uses are not fully clear at this point, but preliminary details are known.

Grafton County Administrator Andrew Dorsett said Wednesday

that the most updated information he has comes from the National Association of Counties (NACo).

NACo reports that Grafton County is slated to receive an estimated \$17,432,836 while Coös County is slated to receive an estimated \$6,121,449.

NACo's website notes, however, that these are proposed allocations from the U.S. Treasury. While they are informed by the House of Representatives and the Congressional Research Service, they are subject to change.

Dorsett said Wednesday afternoon that while the county does not have a clear plan for the funds yet, they are working quickly on possible uses.

Dorsett said Grafton's \$17.4 million could be used to cover broadband internet or courthouse infrastructure. He also said that this round of federal aid, unlike the CARES act, will cover revenue losses due to COVID-19.

"Because of COVID, there have been some significant revenue losses," Dorsett said. "For example at the nursing home, the jail, and the sheriff's department ... just because the demand for services has changed."

He said N.H. counties are banding together and working with

The Dupont Group, a Concord-based consulting firm, to get ahead on funding requirements and ensure they will be in compliance.

On the local front, a March 8 estimate from the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform details projected allocations for all N.H. towns.

According to the document, Littleton would receive around \$581,000, Haverhill would receive \$452,000 and Lancaster would receive \$322,000.

Most other area towns would receive around \$100,000 with allowances based on population. The smallest allocation in the area is projected to be an estimated \$26,000 headed to Easton.

According to the N.H. Municipal Association (NHMA), 50% of town aid will be sent to the state government within 60 days of the plan's enactment, and then sent to towns within 30 days of that.

The other 50% of funds will be distributed 12 months later.

Dorsett, recently the Littleton town manager, said that town funding will be authorized for infrastructure, water, sewer and broadband projects.

He worries that towns unprepared for the funds' arrival may miss out, though he thinks Littleton is likely well set up.

According to the NHMA, towns may also use the federal funds to assist households, businesses or nonprofits or to aid impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality.

Towns will have until 2024 to use the funds to cover qualifying expenses.

The state of New Hampshire itself is estimated to receive \$959 million.

Other categories of aid will support N.H. residents as well.

"There will be significant additional dollars coming to New Hampshire through public health support, rental assistance, and many other provisions in the bill," said Sydney Peterson, Deputy Press Secretary for Senator Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., on Wednesday.

State News

Continued from Page 7

the free samples of maple ice cream, the pancake breakfast, blacksmith demonstration and animals, she said. But people can still purchase products as well as enjoy coffee and a pastry, she said.

Despite the loss of the maple open house weekends in Vermont, some producers say sales have been up with more people staying home and cooking for themselves.

"I just think people are staying home more and using more syrup," said Jim Wells, of Olde Carriage Sugarwoods in Charlotte, Vermont, who said his sales increased at a local market, online and to people stopping by the house. "I almost ran out of syrup, which is unusual."

Others reported a drop in sales after restaurants that they supply shut down.

Sales are down slightly for Turkey Street Maples, in Chocorua, New Hampshire, because restaurants weren't using as much syrup, but grocery stores are still taking their syrup, which they also sell online and curbside, said Kate Stanley.

New Hampshire is having a maple month, with some producers allowing limited visitors, with social distancing, face masks, and other requirements.

Normally about 600 people visit Turkey Street Maples during their maple weekend. They usually have two or three other businesses come and sell their products but this year, their event next weekend will be smaller, she said.

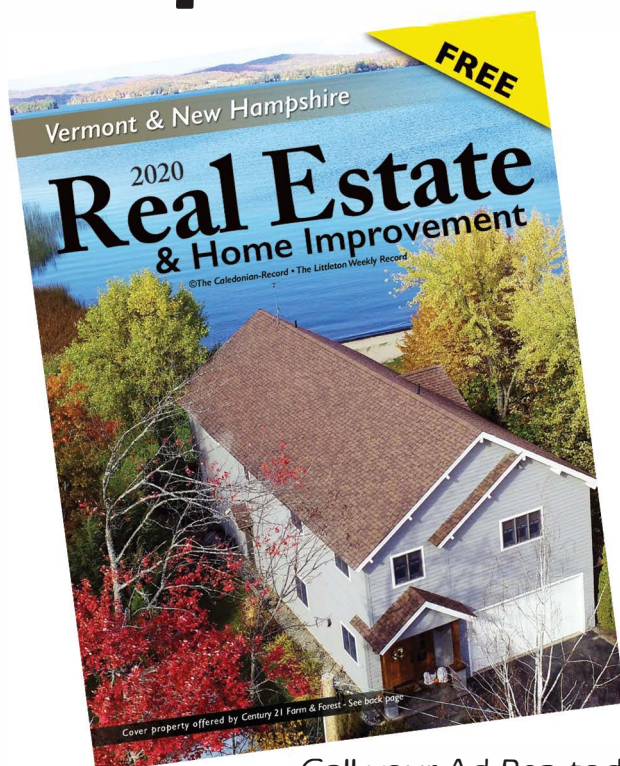
The sugarhouse is too small to have other people inside and maintain a safe distance but French doors built into it allow people to see the process from outside, Stanley said.

"We've pared it back to just us and another local farm," she said.

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News Briefs

Continued from Page 11

“A difficult home makes it more difficult for students to get up and go to school each day,” she said. “This will really create an outreach and safe haven in our schools, and because it’s such a large grant, it will also allow us to restructure our support and services for them and be proactive instead of reactive.”

And while active confirmed coronavirus cases are on the wane and vaccines are being rolled out, unknowns about the future and which mode of learning will be implemented this fall still remain.

“I think we are still seeing a lot of students who are still not returning to school and are still doing remote,” said Watson. “We don’t know what next year will look like ... Will it be safe for students to return? The more support we can put out there, social workers, family workers and getting them into the homes and working with those families, is really critical at this point.”

When working with a student in need and who is faced with issues he or she shouldn’t be faced with, there is only so much that can be done at school, she said.

“This grant will allow us to get into it further with families and do more work for families,” said Watson.

The goal is to sustain the work beyond the grant and find ways and funding to keep it going, and get buy-in from teachers, administrators and community members.

“We’re excited,” said Watson.

SAU 35 serves the towns of Bethlehem, Easton, Franconia, Landaff, Lisbon, Lyman and Sugar Hill.

International Hackers Take Over Bethlehem Country Club Website

No, you’re not seeing things.

It does indeed appear that a brand new business is coming to Bethlehem.

But don’t rejoice yet, gamblers.

The Bethlehem Country Club, which had been owned by the town for seven decades, is not being transformed into an Azerbaijani casino, despite what its website looks like, and if you can understand it.

On Sunday night, club owner Kim Koprowski, who in 2020, with her husband, Mark, bought the 18-hole golf course and country club, received a text from Bethlehem resident Ed Shanshala.

“I think it happened some time over the weekend,” Kim Koprowski said Wednesday. “He said, ‘Kim, a couple of friends and I were going on the website to see membership prices and green fees, and lo and behold, it looks like a Russian website.’ I looked and said you’re right.”

Although Russian hackers are prevalent and notorious, the Google translate app detected the language of Azerbaijan, a nation of 10 million bordering the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey and Iran.

A translation of some words on the BCC website translates to “the best gaming clubs.”

After learning of the cyber takeover, Koprowski, to obtain more information, called the host of the website, godaddy.com, which had been the host for several years when the town owned it.

The BCC site has been designed and managed by Amy Austin before Austin left her software business for another line of work, and it has been regularly updated with the help of BCC general manager Matt Courchaine.

Before she left, Austin helped Koprowski get her name registered with godaddy.

On Monday, Koprowski called the Arizona-based company and explained what happened.

The company representative at the other end of the line had a

good chuckle.

“It does happen, and he said it’s happening more and more,” she said. “The security people there are always trying to stay a step ahead of hackers.”

Fortunately, no money was demanded through ransomware and no valuable BCC information obtained.

The hope is that the intruder-turned-squatter will soon get the boot.

“Just a week before, I bought this website builder from [godaddy] and I’m going to do my own website and publish it,” said Koprowski. “The security on that site wasn’t fantastic, he said. Hackers are good at getting in the front door or the back door, and in this case, they got in the back door. He said as soon as I finish building the website and publish it, that should kick them out. I’m probably three-quarters of the way done building the website. Once I get that done, we will find out.”

She’s not sure how her website came to be targeted.

“The hosting didn’t expire, but the ownership changed,” said Koprowski. “I don’t know if they somehow tag sites that seem

weaker.”

Koprowski didn’t click on any of the website links and it’s uncertain if the hackers have a means of attacking the computers of others who do click on a link and if that’s the intent.

Shanshala and his friends weren’t the only ones who visited the BCC site recently.

“The people in this town have been really good to us and we had a lot of people reaching out to us and asking if we knew,” she said. “I said to Mark we are bringing the town together. Whether you are pro-dump or anti-dump, everybody was laughing at this.”

The BCC’s 2021 opening is weather-driven, and Koprowski said the hope is to open at the end of April and be operating from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. by Memorial Day.

“We just have to see when the snow goes,” she said.

In November, the Koprowskis officially closed on the country club, which had been owned by the town since 1949.

It had been one of three municipally owned golf courses remaining in New Hampshire.

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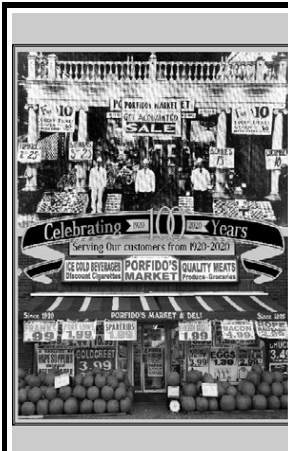
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Littleton Diner Reflects On Pandemic Year

BY PAUL HAYES

Staff Writer

Most of the booths were full at The Littleton Diner on the morning of Wednesday, March 17.

The sound of conversation mixed with the smell of coffee and comfort food at the iconic Main Street eatery, which re-opened last week after a three-and-a-half month, self-imposed COVID-19 shutdown.

With vaccinations underway, and a return to normalcy around the corner, owner Chris Williford was optimistic about the future.

Looking at the roomful of customers — seated in booths separated by Plexiglas barriers — Williford was encouraged that consumer confidence would return in the coming months.

"Today's a good day," he said.

It's been a year since Gov. Chris Sununu's executive order closed restaurant dining rooms on March 16, 2020.

What followed was a quick and dramatic economic downturn. The state's unemployment rate spiked at 16 percent in April, the highest level since the Great Depression. The hospitality and tourism industries, keys to the New Hampshire economy, saw some of the steepest job losses. That same month U.S. retail sales fell 16.4 per-
cent.

The North Country weathered the storm.

Nearly all of the region's restaurants remain open — so far — thanks to a combination of government assistance, customer support, busi-
ness innovation, and careful financial planning.

The Littleton Diner had a tougher year than most. It was closed 6 1/2 of the past 12 months. That included the state-ordered closure from March through June.

The 91-year-old business couldn't expand to outdoor seating. It wasn't geared towards curb-
side service. And COVID anxiety and fear dis-
couraged indoor dining.

Faced with those challenges (and more), Wil-
liford controlled what he could. He installed the
Plexiglas partitions, requires customers to wear
masks, invested in takeout containers, and tight-
ened already strict health and hygiene procedure.

And when customer traffic slowed to a trick-
le in December, during a statewide surge in
COVID cases, the diner went into hibernation.

"We would have become a casualty had we
stayed open," he said.

Like many small businesses, the diner re-
ceived financial assistance through the federal
Paycheck Protection Plan and Economic Injury
Disaster Loan programs.

In addition, North Country business people
like Williford were already preparing for tradi-
tional, seasonal lulls in traffic.

That frugal, Yankee approach helped Wil-
liford to make it through the toughest stretches of
the pandemic.

"We always try to set aside money for the
slower months," he said. "Our mortgage is the
same in January as it is in August. But we don't
have nearly the business in January as we do in
August. That constant has never changed."

COVID heightened that seasonal planning.

"We were more conscious of it last summer
because we knew this winter was going to be
more difficult than normal. It was so difficult we
closed," he said. "But we were able to close be-
cause we had money set aside."

As the focus shifts to re-opening businesses,
some industries face staffing shortages, particu-
larly the retail, hospitality and service industries.

Employers worry that enhanced unemploy-
ment has encouraged people to stay home, rather
than re-enter the workforce. Congress approved
enhanced unemployment at an additional \$600
per week last year, and recently extended it at
an extra \$300 per week through September. That
has made it difficult for some businesses to fill
job openings.

Williford has not experienced that problem.
He said the diner staff — approximately 20 full-
and part-time workers — have been loyal.

"We have a great relationship with our staff.
They treat us well, and we treat them well," he
said. "We were in communication with them
throughout the period we were closed. We were
there for them if a crisis happened, and thankful-
ly nothing did. And they were all very anxious to
get back to work."

The pandemic's long-term impacts remain
unclear.

Williford expects some changes will be per-
manent. He expects to leave the Plexiglas bar-
riers up. He anticipates the diner will continue
to invest in takeout containers, wrap silverware,
and keep up with more stringent cleaning rou-
tines.

When asked about COVID's effect on the re-
gional economy, he was less certain.

"I'll let you know in a year," he said.

When government aid runs out, and bills are
due, some businesses may be forced to shut their
doors, he said.

However, he hoped that everyone would make
it through. More competition makes for a stron-
ger economy, he said.

"It depends on each individual business. How
they handle it," he said. "I think any business
that plans for the future is probably going to
be fine. But if you're just thinking about today,
you're going to be in trouble tomorrow."

Business at the diner this week has been be-
low pre-COVID levels. But it's been steady.

And after 3 1/2 months away, Williford
couldn't be happier to see his customers again.

"It's good to be back together as a diner com-
munity, to see familiar faces, to have the phone
ringing off the hook," he said. "It's a great feel-
ing."

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