



The Littleton Weekly Record

THURSDAY, OCT. 31, 2024

LOCAL NEWS

Investigation Into
Sewer Capacity Issues
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FREE



Cyan Magenta Yellow Black



School Site Sold. Locals Buy Pieces Of
White Mountain School At Auction. **Page 2**

Locals Buy Pieces Of White Mountain School At Auction

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

BETHLEHEM—Although the main campus has found no buyer yet, three pieces of the former White Mountain School property are now under new ownership following an auction on Oct. 29.

After the WMS board of trustees voted on May 31 to close the college preparatory boarding school following years of financial difficulties, the sale was facilitated by the Portland, Maine-based Tranzon Auction Properties.

The White Mountain School had been in the North Country since 1936.

In addition to the opportunity for a sale in its entirety, five separate sale groupings were offered for various pieces along Old Franconia Road and West Farm Road.

The auction drew about 40 people, including several local business owners, realtors and representatives of local nonprofits.

Sale offers 1 and 2 along Old Franconia Road

were for land only; sale offer 3 was for the Steele House along Old Franconia Road; Sale offer 4 was for the main 123-acre campus complex, which, as of Tuesday, had a minimum bank price of \$5 million; sale offer 5 was for the Edge House along West Farm Road; and sale offer 6 for the entire 313-acre property (encompassing sale offers 1 through 5).

In the third and final bidding round, Jody Hodgson, a local attorney, submitted the winning bid of \$25,100 for sale 1, which totals 135.7 acres and abuts his father's property.

Passumpsic Savings Bank, which is the mortgagee of the property, took sale 2 in a bid of \$5,000 for the 8 acres that include a conservation easement, after no bidders were willing to go higher than the bank's \$5,000 minimum.

Trevor Presby, a local business owner and property developer with his brother, Thad, placed the winning bid of \$286,000 for the Steele House, which sits on 40 acres along Old Franconia Road. The bank's minimum was \$285,000, and the original bid in Round 1 was \$150,000.

The main campus in sale 4 went to the bank with a bid of \$5 million after no one was willing to exceed that minimum.

For sale 5, a member of the Glessner family placed a winning bid of \$100,000 for the Edge House, which sits on 6 acres along West Farm Road and is adjacent to the family's property.

No one placed a bid for the entire property. Before the final round, Mike Carey, the auctioneer and co-CEO of Tranzon, said tomorrow is a new day, and the bank's minimum bid numbers might not stand after Tuesday.

He also said, "We know there's a lot of conversations to be had about the main campus. We'll continue those discussions to make sure this facility continues to be a great asset for the community."

Carey said that with today's construction costs, the campus would cost much more than \$5 million.

After the auction, Trevor Presby said he is sorry to see the property divvied up and had been hoping to bid on all of it, but said the \$5 million minimum was too much.

With the estimated \$500,000 annually in property upkeep and taxes, he expects that the bank will want to soon sell the pieces it bought back at auction.

As for the Steele House, Presby has no concrete plans for use and said he will let the family who rents the property remain on it for the foreseeable future.

According to Bethlehem property records, the entire property had been assessed at \$7.86 million.

The private boarding school, which was founded in Concord in 1886 as St. Mary's School before becoming St. Mary's of the Mountains after its 1936 move, housed students from across the world as well as several local students each year.

Before being used as a school, the property had been the Seven Springs Estate.

In 1972, the school became co-educational and was renamed The White Mountain School.

Soon after the school's closure, several local residents and community leaders cited the potential of the property, which they said is set up for multi-use and could be made into additional housing that is needed in the area, a site for arts collaboratives, or another educational institution.

With the bank buying back and taking title to the two properties and the other three now under contract to third parties, a future auction is not being planned and is unlikely. Anyone interested in the two bank properties can reach out directly to Tranzon.

After the auction, Carey said that while the hope was to find a buyer for Tuesday's sale, there are ongoing discussions with those who might have an interest in the main component and Tranzon continues to field those phone calls.

Investigation Launched Into Sewer Plant Capacity Issues

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

WHITEFIELD — Engineering firm Wright-Pierce has launched an investigation into capacity issues at the Whitefield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF).

Wright-Pierce designed the sewer plant renovation and expansion that was completed in 2021. The \$85 million project was supposed to give the WWTF capacity through 2039.

However, through August, the plant exceeded its permitted limit of 185,000 gallons per day four times in eight months this year.

Mike Curry of Wright-Pierce told the Select Board on Oct. 28 that the capacity issues were likely caused by excess stormwater flooding the system.

He guessed that heavy rainfall and extreme weather this year had worsened matters.

Through the investigation, Curry hopes that areas where stormwater enters the system can be found and repaired. Ideally, those

fixes will dramatically reduce system volume and restore capacity.

Wright-Pierce will make monthly progress reports to the Select Board and expects to submit preliminary findings in about six months.

If Wright-Pierce's efforts do not significantly reduce system flow and the plant continues to run near capacity, the town will have to devise a Plan B.

Alternative solutions are unclear at this point.

One idea suggested Oct. 28 was to simply increase the sewer plant's limit.

The plant is permitted to process 185,000 gallons per day but can process up to 290,000 gallons per day.

However, the waterway the plant empties into (the John's River) is too small to handle more discharge, and it's doubtful federal officials would raise the permit limit, Curry said.

Select Board Chair Shawn White lamented

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News Briefs

Developer Pulls Senior Housing Applications After ZBA Denial

After a 3-hour public hearing on Oct. 22, the Bethlehem Zoning Board of Adjustment rejected a special exception for a 32-unit senior housing project proposed for the back of the Sinclair Lot, prompting the developer on Wednesday to formally withdraw the remaining applications.

The board concluded that the 3-story building proposed by Housing Initiatives of New England Corp. on 2.36 acres adjacent to the existing 20-unit senior Hillview Apartments owned by HINEC was not compatible with the neighborhood's character.

What would have been one of the larger senior housing projects in the area in some years met with a cool reception from abutters and residents during a conceptual before the planning board on Oct. 9, with concerns that included the 48-foot height of a building they said is too tall for the neighborhood and impacts to abutters, traffic, and parking.

Zoners sought a special exception to allow a multi-family dwelling on the site within the village district and a variance to allow greater density.

After the rejection of the first (based on the second of five special exception criteria), there was no need for zoners to hear the second request for a variance, and a ZBA hearing that had been scheduled for Thursday to hear more special exception and variance requests was canceled.

Before Tuesday's ZBA rejection, HINEC had also been scheduled to present to the Bethlehem Planning Board on Wednesday.

The three consecutive nights of hearings were necessary because HINEC had an Oct. 31 funding deadline and needed to secure approvals by the end of this week to apply for it.

The combination of funding included low-income housing tax credits and money from the New Housing Finance Authority, the latter of which had an Oct. 31 deadline.

"There's a second deadline of January," said Bill Walker, vice president of the Maine-based nonprofit HINEC. "We have spoken to the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority and essentially they said they have 10 applications and all of that funding will be gone after the first deadline."

After the Oct. 9 conceptual, HINEC moved the proposed location of the building farther to the south, though Tuesday's hearing still found no abutters in support.

Some residents said many questions remained unanswered and expressed concerns that the project was being rushed to meet a funding deadline, impacts to abutters and traffic were not adequately studied, and approval could set a precedent for future buildings.

Letters of concern were also sent to the ZBA and read by board members.

Before the board took its vote, ZBA member Andrea Bryant suggested that the board consult with legal counsel.

"There's too many questions," she said.

Some residents agreed with Walker that there is a need for more senior housing in the community, but said the proposed site is not appropriate and there are other areas in town that would be more suitable.

The building would have gone on the 2.36 acres that are part of a total 4.8-acre parcel owned by the nonprofit Bethlehem Reimagined Inc., which would have sold the half sought by HINEC for \$300,000, which BRI representatives said would have been invested back into the community.

BRI plans a mixed-use development on the lot for community betterment.

White Mountains Regional Ignores Trans Sports Ban

WHITEFIELD — A North Country school district won't enforce a transgender sports ban.

The White Mountains Regional School District declined to incorporate House Bill 1205 into its student athletic participation policy.

Signed into law this year, HB 1205, also known as the Fairness in Women's Sports Act, bars transgender girls from middle and high school sports.

Instead, on Oct. 24, the WMRSD school board unanimously updated its policy to reflect federal law under Title IX.

Title IX was updated in August to prohibit discrimination against transgender students explicitly.

School districts failing to comply with Title IX can lose federal funding.

The New Hampshire School Boards Association has advised that HB 1205 directly conflicts with Title IX, and school districts cannot follow both.

The WMRSD school board decision reflects a recent court ruling.

On Sept. 12, U.S. District Court Judge Landya McCafferty issued a temporary restraining order against HB 1205, finding it unconstitutional and violating Title IX.

In her order, she wrote, wrote: "HB 1205, on its face, discriminates against transgender girls" and that it "is not even a close call."

House Bill 1205, co-sponsored by Republican Rep. Mike Ouellet of Colebrook, requires interscholastic and club sports teams to be designated as either "male," "female," or "co-ed."

Those designated for "females," "women," or "girls" would not be open to students whose biological sex at birth was male.

Testifying before the Senate Education Com-

mittee in April, Ouellet said HB 1205 would protect biologically female athletes like his three daughters and 13-year-old granddaughter.

"The whole thing that I'm concerned about is safety," Ouellet said, noting that his granddaughter is a pitcher playing varsity high school softball as a 5-foot, 90-pound eighth grader. "She's going to be a great athlete. But when you're a 13-year-old [standing in the pitching circle] 35 to 38 feet away from a possible 18-year-old biological male, nothing good can happen."

That opinion was shared by education committee chair Rep. Rick Ladd, R-Haverhill, whose daughter and granddaughter were Division I college track and field athletes.

Ladd testified that his granddaughter had competed head-to-head against former Franklin Pierce University transgender athlete Cece Telfer, who won the NCAA Division II women's 400-meter hurdle national title in 2019.

"I'm totally supportive with everyone being whoever they want to be, but I feel like when you put people born male in girls races, it's just genetically unfair," Ladd said.

Ouellet's testimony was accompanied by a letter from the Colebrook School Board Chair, Timothy Stevens, supporting HB 1205.

In the letter, Stevens writes, "This letter is to show Colebrook School Board's full support of HB1205."

During that same Senate Education hearing, Rep. Hope Damon, D-Croydon, spoke in opposition to the bill.

"One of the things I repeatedly said as I campaigned for office two years ago was that I would bring my voice of kindness to the statehouse, and that is why I'm here speaking today. We need to be kind and respectful of all people. We must also maintain our full compliance with Title 9, the Constitution, and all civil rights laws," she said.

Damon, who voted against the bill as a member of the House Education Committee, said HB 1205 would do more harm than good, particularly for transgender students.

"Students know that sports are far more about socialization, learning, teamwork, and life skills like communication than winning. This bill is another bite into the reasonable, normal pursuit of happiness of trans kids and all kids," Damon said.

Addressing safety concerns, Damon said injuries are already prevalent in school sports, and transgender students would not substantially increase injury risk.

"This bill is not about protecting girls. We all know there are injury risks in all sports. The perception of trans girls as larger, stronger and bulkier than biological girls is not evidenced in fact, and we should be making legislation based on fact," Damon said, adding, "It is a completely

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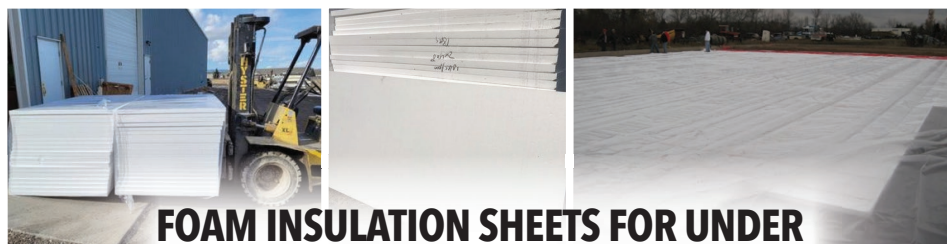
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Obituaries

Rae Davenport

A celebration of life to honor Rae Davenport will be open to the public and held on Sunday, Nov. 3 from noon to 4 p.m. at Fuller Town Hall in Stratford, N.H., 1956 US Route 3. Please stop by to share a memory of Rae with friends and family. Food and refreshments will be available.

For directions to the celebration of life, please visit: www.armstrongcharronfuneralhome.com

Martha Ann Beha Gessner

On Sept. 12, 2024, Martha Ann Beha Gessner, 96, died peacefully at her residence, the Riverglen House, Littleton, N.H., with son Bob at her side.

Martha had a long, creative and varied life. She was born and educated in Columbus, Ohio. She was valedictorian of her St. Mary's High School class of 1945 (where she was an honor student...except for getting less than stellar "Conduct" grades for laughing too much).

Martha enrolled at Ohio State University majoring in Consumer Service in Home Furnishings. She had a natural eye for color and design, and interior design became her passion and lifelong interest.

At OSU she pledged to Alpha Chi Omega Sorority and became editor of the yearbook The Makio. Each year at OSU Martha was one of 20 women selected for the Honor Society. She graduated Cum Laud in 1949.

After graduation Martha worked in Cleveland, Ohio, for F. Schumacher & Co; in 1951, she was transferred to the New York City headquarters and began a decade of work as an interior decorator's consultant. She travelled around the United States, offering lectures and advice to homemakers, answering their questions and working to solve their home decorating challenges.

In 1962, Martha married Norman Gessner, a widower with twin 15-year-old sons, Bill and Bob. Martha moved into their home in Yonkers, N.Y., and exchanged a successful professional career for the role of wife, suburban homemaker and mother of teenage boys. Years later after their Yonkers nest was empty, and Norman



had retired, Martha and Norman relocated to St. Johnsbury, Vt., in 1979. Bill and his wife Wendy had already settled in Vermont, and Bob and his wife Mary Ann moved to Vermont in 1979 as well.

Throughout her life, Martha never ceased being hard-working, artistic and creative. She was an accomplished seamstress, sewing clothes for her herself and family members. She created colorful Christmas banners, quilts and blankets for babies, and many hand-hooked rugs. She made great contributions over many years to the St. Johnsbury Health and Rehab Activities program and the St. John's Christmas Bazaar, creating beautiful and affordable pieces. She also sewed attractive hospital gowns for bed bound patients at the St. Johnsbury Health and Rehab Center.

In St. Johnsbury, Martha and Norman were avid square dancers with the Country Corner Squares. Martha was a lector at St. John's Church in St. Johnsbury. She and Norman spent many winters in KOA Campgrounds in Florida.

Music was always important to Martha, the daughter of a piano teacher; she played the piano or organ until well into her 90s, sometimes entertaining the residents of the Riverglen House, her home for 8 years. She liked many kinds of music, but especially classical music.

She was an avid reader. Activities Director Melissa Pilgrim at the Riverglen House managed to keep Martha supplied with amazing amounts of books. Martha's vocabulary was, hence, excellent...what a Scrabble player she was! Her sense of color was evident in the many coloring projects Martha did right till the end of her life.

Martha was predeceased by her parents, Helen (Callahan) and Henry Beha; her husband of 42 years, Norman; her sister Sr. Marie Beha, OSC; and her son Bill earlier this year. She is survived by son Bob (wife Mary Ann) of Sheffield; grandchildren Mark (wife Dawn) of Harrison, N.Y.; Dan of Lyndonville; Katie (husband Nick) of Sheffield; Ryan (wife Kate) of Efland, N.C. Martha also leaves great-grandchildren Jack, Evan, Jocelyn, Margaret, and Abigail, as well as a community of friends at the Riverglen House.

The family would like to thank the staff of Riverglen House for their care throughout Martha's years there. The family is very grateful to Dr. Joyce Dobbartin, Martha's primary care physician for decades. Martha will be remembered at Catholic Masses and will be buried in Sheffield in the spring, 2025.

Michael James Carver

February 23, 1961 – October 9, 2024

Michael (Mike) Carver, aged 63, died Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at his home in Lisbon, N.H., with family by his side and following a courageous battle with prostate and bone cancer.

Mike was born February 23, 1961, to James and Ann (Kenneally) Carver in Weymouth, Mass., and was the oldest of six children. He is a graduate of Whitman-Hanson High School, attended Cape Cod Community College and North Adams State College, and is a 2002 graduate of Mendenhall School of Auctioneering Resident Training in High Point, N.C.



In 1988, Mike married his soulmate, Janine (Betourney), who was his partner in life, love, and business for 36 years. While they had no children, they were blessed with many cherished feline furbabies, which they adored.

Mike was an entrepreneur at heart and self-employed for a majority of his adult life. Since 2002, Mike was an auctioneer, appraiser, and owner of Ammonoosuc River Auction Company in Lisbon. Prior businesses include Ammonoosuc River Trading Company, Dr. Carver's Furniture Restoration Shop, and Carriage House Antiques. He also served as Selectman for the Town of Lisbon.

Mike was enthusiastic about everything. He loved his family, friends, businesses, customers, and talking to anyone about anything. He also loved his McDonalds "Coffee Club" crew, who he joined most weekdays (pre-COVID) for very many years to enjoy breakfast, gossip, laughs, and friendship. For the past year, while struggling with increasing pain, he also found a way to stay enthusiastic about life, touching all his friends and family with his positivity and strength. Mike is predeceased by his parents, James and Ann Carver, and infant brother, James Patrick Carver.

He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Jan, brothers Thomas (Mary) of Melbourne, Fla., John of Sandwich, Mass., and William of St. Augustine, Fla., sister Catherine (Scott) Boudreau of Plymouth, Mass., nephews/niece Sean, Timothy, Ethan, Brandon, Aydan, and Madeline, and his Kenneally and Ludwig cousins. He is also survived by his cats, Peanut and Buttercup.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., with a service at 11 a.m. with Reverend Lyn Winter at Ross Funeral Home, 282 West Main Street, Littleton. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to North Country Home Health and Hospice 536 Cottage Street, Littleton, NH 03561 or Second Chance Animal Rescue, 1517 Meadow Street, Littleton, NH 03561. To offer your condolences please visit www.rossfuneral.com.

Samuel Paul Samson

Samuel Paul Samson, 88, passed peacefully on Monday, Octo-

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Investigation

Continued from Page 2

that if the John’s River were larger, raising the permit limit wouldn’t be an issue.

“It’s a small river,” White said. “If it was the Connecticut River we wouldn’t be here because our permit would be a lot higher.”

During discussion Monday, questions were raised why Wright-Pierce failed to accurately forecast system volume when plans were created.

Curry said projections were based on data from 2012 to 2016, and that the volume had unexpectedly spiked since then.

Pressing the issue, Selectman Scott Black cited documentation showing that Wright-Pierce had been notified of higher flow in 2018, before work began.

“That says that there was a problem, and you were aware of it,” Black said.

Curry said data collected over the four-year period from 2012-2016 had been consistent, while there were questions about the accuracy of the 2018 numbers.

Peter Corey, a Select Board member during project development, said Wright-Pierce’s plans had been thoroughly vetted.

“I think they did their absolute best to provide us with a product that was going to last for many, many years,” Corey said, who in 2021 touted the plant upgrade as crucial infrastructure to bolster economic development. “There was a lot of conversation about how much could we anticipate White-

field growing over a period of time. So there was an intent to make sure there was capacity for that.”

“It’s unfortunate that we are where we are. But I think part of that is our own responsibility. We have to get after this [stormwater infiltration] issue. I think that will grow us some capacity so the plant can serve the community well into the future.”

The Whitefield sewer plant project was set in motion in 2015.

That’s when the town was notified by the Environmental Protection Agency that it was in violation of its discharge permits into the John’s River. EPA issued an administrative order, which could have led to fines, and was given a timeline to correct the situation.

The town worked with Horizons Engineering and the state

Department of Environmental Services to plan for the replacement of the wastewater treatment plant.

In 2017, the town submitted a USDA Rural Development grant application and was approved for a \$6.5 million project, of which \$2.9 million was grant-funded. Months later, voters at town meeting approved the project.

Upon further review by the Department of Environmental Services, it was determined it would take an additional \$1.6 million to build a suitable plant for the town. Town meeting voters granted permission for the added funds.

The town must now repay the USDA bond of \$3.56 million over the next 24 years at an interest rate of 1.25% and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan of \$1.4 million at a rate of 2% over the next 27 years (which includes \$190,000 in loan forgiveness).

Obituaries

Continued from Page 6

ber 21, 2024, at his home in Littleton, N.H. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 10 a.m. with Father Ryan Amazeen officiating. A private burial will take place. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to a community charity of your choice. To offer your condolences please visit www.rossfuneral.com.

Donna B. McCullock

Donna B. McCullock passed away on Oct. 19, 2024, at her home with her loving husband by her side at the age of 79. She was born on Nov. 19, 1944, the daughter of Robert and Daniela (Belmore) Bresnahan.

In 1980 she married the love of her life, Kenneth McCullock, with whom she shared 44 years of marriage and memories.

Donna graduated from Whitefield High School in 1962. Following graduation, Donna pursued her passion for beauty and style at cosmetology school. She briefly worked in cosmetology before embarking on a long career at Littleton Regional Hospital. For 32 years, she dedicated herself to the hospital’s accounts receivables department. After retiring from the hospital, she found great joy in knitting and crocheting, creating beautiful handmade pieces. She was also an active and faithful member of St. Matthew’s Church in Whitefield, N.H.

Donna was predeceased by her parents, her stepfather, Romeo, and all her sisters.

She is survived by her husband, Kenneth, and her nieces and nephews.

There will be no formal services held at this time. In lieu of flowers, donations in Donna’s memory can be made to Second Chance Animal Rescue.

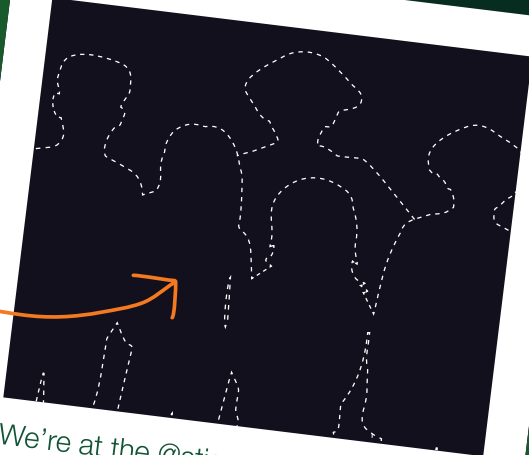
To view Donna’s online tribute, or to send condolences to her family, please visit: <https://obits.phaneuf.net/donna-mccullock>



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News Briefs

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unrealistic fear that males who are not trans will casually decide to pretend they are trans so as to play on girls sports teams.”

Landfill Permitting Process Extended As State Seeks More Info

After a Casella Waste Systems engineer in January told Dalton residents that applications for its proposed Dalton landfill would be submitted in 2024, with public hearings to follow in late summer or early fall, the permitting process has now been extended into 2025 following the state’s repeated requests for more infor-

mation and its multiple declarations of incomplete applications. Meanwhile, regarding leachate disposal, an opposition group is asking the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to deny the solid waste standard permit on the argument that the company has not provided written agreements with at least two wastewater treatment facilities, as required by law, which it said is especially problematic given Casella’s mounting leachate disposal issues and violations at its NCES landfill in Bethlehem. In the past week, John Gay, a Casella engineer, filed another time extension agreement with DES to extend the submission of the alteration of terrain permit application to Jan. 22, 2025 (the previous deadline was Tuesday, Oct. 22) and extend DES’s review of the pending wetlands permit application to Jan. 22. The latter, according to DES’s David Price, of the Wetlands Bureau, was revised to reflect the time frame DES has to render a decision.

On Tuesday, Mary Daun, engineer with DES’s Solid Waste Management Bureau, wrote Gay to say that after DES’s previous letters of incompleteness regarding the standard permit application, Casella has still not provided the information to demonstrate that it meets the landowner requirements and that all easements and rights-of-way meet state requirements.

The land for the proposed Granite State Landfill is currently owned by Douglas Ingerson Jr., with whom Casella has an option to purchase.

Regarding abutters, DES has not received the required signed return receipts for notices of filing for abutters identified by Casella in February, she said. The company has also not provided information to demonstrate that the facility will not successfully operate within the normal window of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the proposed alternative hours will not result in problems related to safety, access, or nuisances, said Daun.

In addition, Casella has not provided a consistent financial assurance plan. “The financial assurance plan provided contained inconsistencies between the various submittals,” she wrote. “For example, the principal address is not stated consistently throughout the documents and there were two different cost estimates for closure between separate submittals.”

Daun’s letter was also sent to the towns of Dalton, Bethlehem, Littleton, and Whitefield, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, and the Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Commission.

DES is now suspending review of the standard permit application until the requested information is provided.

All of the information needed to complete the application must be submitted by Feb. 28, within one year of the date of the first incomplete application letter issued to Casella on Feb. 28, 2024, to avoid having the application become dormant and be denied, said Daun.

NCABC’s Leachate Concerns Before the state requested more information on the standard permit application, Amy Manzelli, an environmental attorney representing the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, wrote DES on Sept. 20 to request that the department deny the permit. “There are several issues with the Application related to leachate disposal,” said Manzelli. “Namely, GSL has not provided — and appears to not have — agreements with wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) to accept leachate from the Landfill during what would be its active life. This is particularly concerning in the wake of recent difficulties and violations Casella’s North Country Environmental Services Landfill (NCES) has had with leachate disposal, culminating in Casella’s recent request to permanently maintain emergency operating hours for hauling an undetermined amount of leachate out of NCES.”

PFAS, including PFAS from landfill leachate, is also a key concern for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as it develops a new general permit for New Hampshire’s medium-sized WWTFs, she said. Casella has identified several facilities for leachate disposal — in Concord, Allenstown and Franklin in New Hampshire, Plattsburgh in New York, Anson-Madison in Maine, and Passaic Valley, N.J. — but has not produced written agreements with at least two of them as required by law, said Manzelli.

“The recent struggles NCES has had with leachate disposal bring into focus the need for the Landfill to meet every state requirement related to leachate disposal, including adequate written agreements with leachate treatment/disposal facilities that can meet the Landfill’s leachate needs over the course of its active life,” said Manzelli. “Without these assurances, the Landfill would undoubtedly encounter the same hurdles that have plagued NCES.”

For example, in April 2024, Casella requested emergency classification for NCES, seeking approval to transport leachate 24/7 for a 14-day period, citing “unforeseen circumstances,” including reductions of disposal capacity from primary wastewater disposal outlets, the need to haul leachate much farther distances, and the need to operate outside of normal operational hours to keep up with leachate generation, she said.

Leachate is generated by decomposing waste and rainwater that percolates through solid waste and leaches out some of the waste elements, including toxins and pollutants. In presentations to local communities, Tom Tower, vice-president of NCABC, said every ton of trash generates a ton of leach-

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News Briefs

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ate.

“This emergency episode in April of 2024 perhaps could have been explained away as a one-off situation caused by unforeseen circumstances, but NCES has since requested to maintain emergency conditions on a permanent basis,” said Manzelli.

In her closing argument asking DES to deny the permit, she said, “It is crucial that GSL provide evidence of sufficient written agreements with WWTFs to cover the Landfill’s entire active life, because as shown by the mounting leachate disposal problems at NCES that have led to temporary and permanent emergency requests, leachate issues can compound if they are not adequately addressed from the start.”

What is more, PFAS, including PFAS from landfill leachate, have become a primary concern for the EPA, making it especially important that the Department not place leachate disposal on the backburner when evaluating landfills, she said.

To date, Casella’s GSL has been granted one approval, a shoreland impact permit, though that is under appeal by the Dalton Conservation Commission before the New Hampshire Wetlands Council.

Conservation Commission Pushes For Town Forest

WHITEFIELD — Plans to create a town forest are taking shape.

The Conservation Commission on Aug. 14 recommended establishing a town forest next to the Industrial Park.

It would be done by combining two town-owned parcels into one 100-acre lot.

According to a Conservation Commission memo, town forests are distinct from town parks in that they are contiguous tracts of preserved wooded land that contain diverse wildlife and plantlife.

They are multi-use forests that are managed to Provide people with outdoor recreational opportunities (hiking, birding, photography, cross-country skiing), protect watersheds, wildlife and vegetation, educate users about nature, and allow for selective timber harvesting.

“Town forests are more than just scenic landmarks,” the memo said. “They also promote community vitality and provide priceless public benefits like watershed protection, wildlife habitat, forest products, outdoor classrooms, and neighborhood gathering places. One major benefit of town forests, outdoor forest-based recreation, offers both great opportunities and growing challenges.”

The proposal requires voter approval, and the Conservation Commission has asked that it be considered at a Town Meeting in March 2025.

The Conservation Commission would manage a town forest under the direction of the Select Board.

Forest management would include designing, building, and maintaining recreation trails.

Commissioner Frank Lombardi told the Select Board on Mon-

day that town forest trails would connect to the neighboring Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge trail system.

Select Board Chair Shawn White said some land should be set aside for further industrial park growth.

White suggested a lot line adjustment to preserve a section of the land for industrial park expansion.

Lombardi said designating the land as a town forest was not a legal agreement (like a conservation easement) and did not prohibit future development.

However, Lombardi said town counsel should weigh in on questions about development and liability.

The proposed town forest location is located south of the White Mountains Regional Airport runway.

A half-acre is currently used for material storage, but Lombardi said those materials could be stored at another town-owned location on Brown Street.

He said White Mountains Regional High School students may be available to assist with the town forest’s development.

According to the Conservation Commission memo, the first town forest in the country was established in New Hampshire in 1711.

Per the memo, the following are some local towns that manage town forests:

— Bethlehem currently has 78.5 acres of Town Forest in the central western part of town.

— Errol was only a town of 282 people when they decided to take on preserving the 5,300 acres in the 13 Mile Woods.

— Randolph’s Community Forest is over 10,000 acres and is completely self-sustaining. Timber harvesting money is used for road maintenance, culverts, keeping some fields open for wildlife, etc.

They also have an annual Forest Day event on the first Saturday in August that consistently draws 40-50 people to see what is being done.

— Milan’s Town Forest is 1,400 acres.

— Gorham’s Town Forest is currently 4,000 acres and they are now campaigning to add another 2,000.

— Lancaster’s Town Forest is currently 260.1 acres

— Whitefield’s proposed Town Forest will be a total of 105.65 acres if voted in at Town Meeting.

Lancaster Raises Water, Sewer Rates

LANCASTER — The Select Board on Oct. 21 approved a wa-

ter and sewer rate hike.

By a 3-0 vote, they raised the water and sewer rates from \$3.75 to \$6.50 per 1,000 gallons (up to a million gallons).

The rate for water consumption over one million gallons was increased from 30 to 50 cents per 1,000 gallons.

The new rates will take effect in April 2025.

It is the first consumption rate increase in 14 years.

The Select Board will review the water department’s financials in late 2025/early 2026 to determine if a second increase to \$8 per 1,000 gallons is needed.

In August, the Select Board explained that the water and sewer department had run a deficit for years because its rates were too low, requiring it to draw from its reserve funds to make ends meet.

As a result, the department could not maintain and replace its aging infrastructure. For example, town officials said:

See News Briefs, Page 10

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News Briefs

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— The town's water system is deteriorating and has experienced a series of leaks and water main breaks in recent years.

— Nearly 10 miles of the water system's pipeline is at, or near, its life expectancy and must be replaced.

— The 54-year-old wastewater treatment facility is declining faster than it can be repaired or replaced.

— In May, it cost the town \$13,789 to patch a sewer line break on Main Street. That cost estimate does not include staff and machine hours.

The Select Board had considered seven different rate increase scenarios, in order to provide the department with sufficient funds to cover expenses and plan for the future.

The base rate was last increased in 2018 (from \$80 to \$110 for water and \$125 for sewer); the consumption rate has remained flat since 2010.

Partly for that reason, the board chose to increase the consumption rate this time.

The water system has approximately 934 water connections and 25 miles of distribution piping, serving 2,500 people and businesses.

During an initial public hearing on Aug. 19, the board proposed a one-time increase to \$8 for water and sewer, which residents argued was too steep.

In response to feedback, the Select Board opted to phase in the rate hike, to "ease the pain."

In recent years, the Select Board has updated multiple long-neglected rate and fee schedules.

In 2023, the Select Board approved the first cost hike for town

trash bags in 24 years and for building permits in 20 years. Before those hikes, the town had lost \$45,000 per year on the pay-as-you-throw program (trash bag prices had not been raised five percent annually as originally planned in 1999), and the municipal staff had processed building permits at a loss.

Families Of Loved Ones Lost To Addiction Sought For Story, Portrait Project

When it comes to those who have lost their lives in the battle against addiction, there aren't many degrees of separation.

Parents have lost children, children have lost parents, grandparents have lost grandchildren, friends have lost friends.

If someone has not been impacted directly, many know someone who was.

For years, North Country families have been hit hard.

To humanize those who died and educate others, the Into Light Project is seeking the participation of North Country families to share the stories of their loved ones and collaborate on hand-drawn portraits.

It is the first entry into New Hampshire for the national art and activism project, which was founded in 2018 to end the stigma surrounding the disease of addiction and to address the misconception that people with addiction are to blame for their illness.

Professional writers will assemble the stories into narratives, and professional artists will complete the portraits. The stories will be displayed in an art exhibit at Plymouth State University beginning in August 2025.

To date, 13 families are participating in New Hampshire. The goal is to have 40 before the enrollment process ends in April.

"We would like to get some people from the North Country

who would like to participate," said Joanne Gillespie, a New Hampshire native and ambassador for the project.

Gillespie became involved in the project after her own loss — her son, Eric Adam Gillespie, an Iraq War veteran, lost his struggle to addiction in 2022.

"While I know it's a very personal thing and some people can't do it for a number of reasons, we would like to give families from the North Country the opportunity," she said. "This is going to be in their backyard."

The project was founded in 2018 by Theresa Clower, who lost her son, Devin, to an overdose.

An artist who was then living in Baltimore, Clower felt compelled to draw a portrait of her son, even though she had never been a portrait artist.

"It was therapeutic for her and helped her process her grief," said Gillespie.

Thinking that it would be the goodbye to her son, Clower, whose emotions had poured out through the process, put the portrait away.

"Her family was so taken with the portrait, they said, 'you've got to keep doing this,'" said Gillespie.

Clower, who still felt compelled to draw, did keep going and drew portraits of others, including her grandchildren.

"She then asked, 'why am I doing this?'" said Gillespie. "I need to be doing this for other people who have lost children." So she bounced it off a friend who was living nearby and started Into Light Project."

Clower feels strongly about the graphite portraits because she said it is an analogy for life.

"We all have light and dark in our lives," said Gillespie. "And even though these people lost their lives in darkness, that's really not who they were. They had a lot of light in their lives. And she came up with the idea that she wanted to have a narrative to go along with them because it tells their story, it portrays them as the people that they really were, not just the disease they had."

Families seeking to participate can visit the website, learn of the different states accepting applications, fill out a questionnaire with the information that will be written into the narrative, and provide at least three photographs of their loved one.

"As long as they have all the information we need, and as long as there are not 40 people yet in New Hampshire, they will be in the exhibit," said Gillespie. "It's free. We're a nonprofit, but we do fundraising. We'll be starting that the first of the year, but right now the focus is mostly on getting the families into the exhibit."

The goal is to bring the project to all 50 states.

"Theresa's dream is to have all of the portraits in a national exhibit, similar to what they did with the AIDS quilt," said Gillespie. "We haven't quite figured out where that's going to be. We've only done 15 states so far. Next year, we'll do three more and we're hoping to add states each year after that."

Gillespie has been with the project for more than a year.

It had been difficult finding a venue in New Hampshire until the curator at Plymouth State University heard about the project and reached out, she said.

In addition to finding families, the artists will need time to draw the portraits, which each family must first approve to ensure that the eyes, expressions, and other features capture the person they lost.

"We will work with the families on how it looks to them, and we have professional writers who put the narratives together," Gillespie. "A lot of people are a little intimidated and say I can't write. You don't have to write. All you have to do is tell your loved one's story and we'll write it for you and you can tell us if it sounds like your loved one."

The project currently has a team of five artists.

Clower seeks a certain portrait look.

"She wants an artist who can really capture someone's essence," said Gillespie. "A portrait is a hard thing to do. Not everyone can capture that essence of a person without knowing them. They'll work with the families."

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News Briefs

Continued from Page 10

At the time of her son's death, Gillespie had moved to Delaware, where her son had moved to live with her.

"I had joined a grief support group after he died in 2022," she said. "Through that group, somebody had been contacted by someone in Delaware who was working on the project in Delaware. I heard about the project and looked at the website just fell in love with it. What I like about it is the respect and the dignity that people are getting. When someone is addicted, they are often stigmatized and not treated with a lot of respect. I understand how people have issues with someone who has an addiction. It's just like any other disease. Some people who have addictions are good people and some not so good."

It can be difficult to not have a stereotype, said Gillespie.

But as her son's condition worsened, and as she began to question if she was doing anything wrong, she read more about addiction and learned it's a brain disease.

"Not everybody who starts doing drugs gets addicted," said Gillespie, who now lives in Londonderry. "It depends a lot on their physiology and on the level of trauma they've experienced. My son was in the Iraq War. He was in combat and he came home with PTSD and a number of physical issues as well. After I admitted my son into the Delaware project, I said I love this project so much. I want to become involved and bring it to New Hampshire because that's my home."

When the PSU exhibit concludes in November 2025 after three months, there will be a ceremony for families, who will be given the portraits, a catalog of everyone who's in the exhibit, and a button that reflects a picture of the portrait and the words "ask me about" followed by their loved one's name.

"I wore the button and people ask me and I get to talk about my son, I get to talk about the fact that addiction is a disease, I get to educate people as well as let them know about him, that he was a great person, a beautiful human being, and was compassionate and caring and loved animals," said Gillespie. "It was really hard at first. At first, I cried every time. But it did get easier for me to talk about him and now I feel like he's sitting on my shoulder when I talk to people and he would be happy I'm trying to educate people about it."

Erasing stigma is paramount, she said.

"I can't tell you how many parents I've ran into who said I didn't even know my child had a problem, because they're afraid to tell people," said Gillespie. "If one good thing can come of this project, if people can start reaching out, that would be wonderful. Every time we tell a story, every time a family shares that, I think it helps move that needle a little bit."

To participate or learn more, visit <https://intolightproject.org>

Littleton Could Again Own "Bertha" Antique Fire Engine

LITTLETON — For generations, the town owned "Bertha," the 1931 LaFrance fire engine, which was the first of its kind in New Hampshire.

After she retired from service, Bertha, which the town had bought brand new, became the star of community parades.

But the years had not been kind to her, and in 2007, the town sold the truck for \$1 to Eureka Hose Co., a nonprofit made up of current and past Littleton firefighters, with the intent to have her restored.

But with Eureka Hose lacking resources, the deterioration of the fire apparatus continued.

Several years ago, Eureka Hose sold Bertha to a vintage fire engine restorer, David Houghton, of Moultonborough, who had served as Littleton's interim fire chief.

After several years, Houghton's work is complete, and a restored Bertha is looking for a new home.

See full story at www.CaledonianRecord.com



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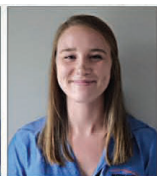
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