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Five Days A Week. Schools Returning To Full-Time, In Person Learning. **Page 2**



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North Country Schools Prepare To Open Full-Time

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

North Country school districts have two weeks to resume full-time, in-person learning.

Gov. Chris Sununu has announced an April 19 deadline for New Hampshire school districts to offer in-person classes five days a week.

A remote option will still be available for parents and students that request it, he said.

“We have said all along, and it has been proven, that schools can reopen safely, and that remains as true today as ever,” Sununu said.

Sununu said his decision was tied to ongoing vaccinations. Most teachers and school staff have started the vaccination process and, as of Friday, students age 16 and up can register to get their shots.

About 60% of New Hampshire K-12 schools are already open full-time and an additional 16% are offering in-person learning four days a week.

“We all know we need to get our kids back into schools, not just for educational reasons but for mental health reasons, for socialization,” Sununu said. “During the crisis, remote learning was a good backstop, but doesn’t come nearly as close to providing the fulfillment and enrichment that being in the classroom, not just a couple of days a week but five days a week can allow.”

HYBRID TO FULL-TIME

Sununu’s decision impacts school districts that remain in hybrid mode, including White Mountains Regional SAU 36 (Carroll, Dalton, Jefferson, Lancaster and Whitefield) and Little-

ton SAU 84.

White Mountains has been in a “two-days in-person, three-days remote” hybrid mode since September.

On April 2, district officials hurried to develop a plan. The SAU 36 Health Committee met Friday and will make recommendations to the School Board on Monday night.

A plan will be finalized over the next week.

Meanwhile, Littleton Schools have been four days in person, with Wednesdays off.

Last month they had voted to stay in that mode for the remainder of the school year. Sununu’s announcement changed that.

Superintendent William Hart has held extensive talks with school leadership and staff.

The school board took up the matter at their next meeting on Monday (see related story below).

“By [Friday, April 9] we’ll have a much clearer direction to share with the school community,” he said.

For hybrid districts, the move to full-time in-person poses challenges.

Littleton teachers used the Wednesday off-day to plan, and instruct students who had opted for fully remote learning during COVID. The move to five days a week will likely mean longer days, as teachers increasingly juggle classroom instruction, remote instruction and planning.

COVID had already strained staffing to “critical levels” in the White Mountains Regional School District. It is unclear how the move to five days a week will impact those staffing levels. Many teachers will not be fully vaccinated

by April 19.

ALREADY FIVE DAYS

Other school districts in northern New Hampshire have already returned to full-time schedules.

That includes SAU 23 schools in Bath, Haverhill and Piermont, which resumed a five-day school week on March 15, and SAU 58 schools in Stark, Stratford and Northumberland, which have been full-time for the entire school year.

Ronna Cadarette, superintendent for SAU 58, said schools in her district have successfully coped with COVID issues.

“Things are tight, but we have removed furniture to provide for social distancing,” she said, adding, “We have added classes and staff to accommodate for social distancing and student learning challenges.”

Noting that staff shortages are a perennial concern, she said the district continues to search for more full-time staff, substitute teachers, bus drivers and more.

She expects those issues will continue after COVID.

Despite those challenges and more, SAU 58 schools have remained open throughout the 2020-21 school year thanks to what Cadarette called a “strong and valiant community commitment by students, parents, faculty, staff, custodians, kitchen personnel, administrators and our boards who have been focused on having students in our schools every day.”

She said those efforts have benefited students inside — and outside — of the classroom.

“We still seek to support the social-emotion-

al needs of students to be prepared to learn and live healthy lifestyles throughout the pandemic and beyond,” she said.

BY THE NUMBERS

Since March 2020, North Country schools have reported a handful of cases.

Those include Colebrook Academy (3 cases, one active), Colebrook Elementary (6 cases, none active), Lafayette Regional (2 cases, none active), Lancaster Elementary (9 cases, none active), Landaff Blue School (1 case, none active), Lakeway Elementary (3 cases, none active), Lisbon Elementary (3 cases, none active), Littleton High (3 cases, none active), Profile Jr./Sr. High (3 cases, none active), Stratford (1 case, none active), White Mountains Regional High (3 cases, 1 active), Whitefield Elementary (3 cases, none active), and Woodsville High School (1 case, none active).

Statewide, more than 86,000 people have tested positive for the coronavirus in New Hampshire, including 289 cases announced April 5. The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in New Hampshire has risen over the past two weeks from 275 new cases per day on March 20 to 403 new cases per day on Saturday, April 3, according to Associated Press reports.

As of April 4 there were 36 active cases in Berlin, 18 in Littleton, 7 each in Bethlehem and Colebrook, and at least one in Columbia, Gorham, Haverhill, Lancaster, Lincoln, Lisbon, Lyman, Milan, Monroe, Piermont, Stark, Warren, Whitefield, Woodstock

Littleton School District Seeks Brief Waiver From New 5-Day School Week Order

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Days after the Littleton School Board voted 3-2 to maintain four-day school weeks through the remainder of the school year, the governor issued a new emergency order calling for all New Hampshire schools to resume five-day school weeks beginning in April.

The order went to a discussion Monday by the Littleton School Board, which on March 29 voted to take the recommendation of Littleton School District SAU 84, Superintendent William Hart, to keep with the current four-day weeks in the classroom (Wednesdays are remote learning days and planning days for teachers) because it has worked well, is the basis of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Littleton Teachers Association union, and accommodates the teachers’ COVID-19 vaccination schedules.

The governor’s order issued on Friday,

though, calls for schools to resume five-day weeks beginning Monday, April 19, the week before April vacation.

In a split vote similar to last week, the Littleton School Board on Monday took Hart’s recommendation to seek a waiver to keep a four-day week during the week of April 19 and resume five-day weeks beginning Monday, May 3, following April vacation (which is April 26 to 30).

“As you can imagine, there’s been a lot of discussion around this emergency order from the governor, and over the last few days there’s been conversations with superintendents,” said Hart.

Although Gov. Chris Sununu has ordered schools back to five days for 6 1/2 hours a day, there are exceptions, including for emergencies around COVID-19 that would create staffing issues or significant student absenteeism, he said.

Under the order, a K-12 school can transition to all-remote learning for up to 48 hours without approval if such a transition is needed to assess concerns regarding infections, staffing shortag-

es, or other unexpected events.

A school can make the transition to all-remote learning for longer than 48 hours for the same COVID-related reasons, but must then receive approval from the New Hampshire Department of Education commissioner, who would consider any request in consultation with the governor and state Division of Public Health Services.

After consulting with Mike Elwell, legal counsel for the Littleton School District, Hart said it’s clear to him that the district needs to follow the governor’s order, which he said supersedes the school board’s MOU with teachers.

“I met with union representatives today and we started what I thought was a good conversation,” said Hart. “My intent is to say to our administrative team that we need to move forward with opening the schools five days a week. You still have to support students that are in remote, both for medical reasons and just for personal decision reasons.”

Hart, though, said he will look to see if there is a waiver component connected to health and

safety.

“I think it makes sense for us to look for a waiver for that week before vacation,” he said. “I’m hoping that will be a strong enough argument for the governor or Department of Education ...”

The rationale for a waiver is that the overwhelming majority of teachers will be fully vaccinated when schools resume on May 3 following April vacation, but they won’t be fully vaccinated a week prior to vacation, said Hart.

A waiver request also comes during a time when the current number of active confirmed cases in Littleton has increased in recent weeks, he said.

Hart said some school superintendents have talked about ignoring the order, but that would not be his recommendation, in part because the Littleton School District receives a good chunk of money from the state.

“We put ourselves at risk if we try to take a

See **Waiver**, Page 15

Truck Traffic By Schools Is Latest Landfill Fear

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

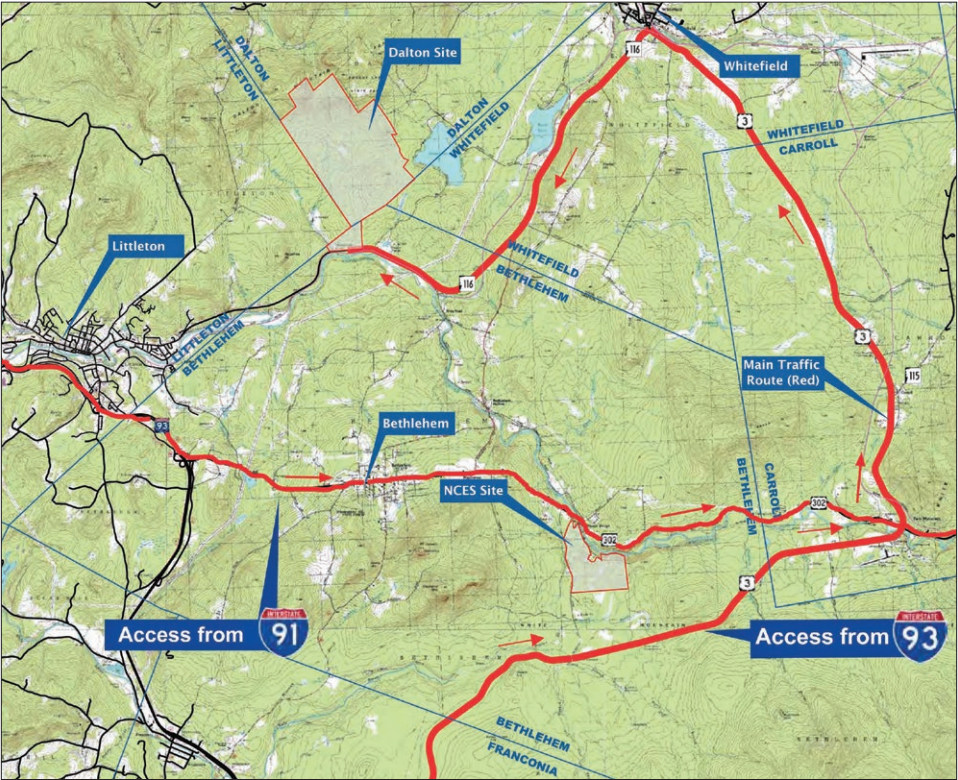
There's a new concern being voiced about the proposed Casella Waste Systems landfill beside Forest Lake Park in Dalton — big trucks passing by Whitefield and Bethlehem elementary schools and posing a traffic safety issue.

WES is along Route 3 on the northbound route that Casella's MBI trucks (Mr. Bult's Inc., a contracted waste hauler) will take before they hang a left on Route 116 in Whitefield, at an intersection downhill from the school, to the destination in Dalton.

The concerns about road safety and school safety have now been referred to state education officials, including the New Hampshire Department of Education commissioner, and the issue will be discussed Monday by members of the SAU 36 White Mountains Regional School Board at their scheduled meeting.

On Monday, WMRSB Chairman Greg Odell wrote Carl Ladd, executive director for the New Hampshire School Administrators Association, about his concerns, stating that right now they are his own, but the topic will go to a discussion among all board members.

"The preferred trucking route is directly past the Whitefield Elementary School," said Odell. "It is expected that 100 or more waste haulers (many large tractor-trailer types) will pass the school going round trip, so, potentially, 200 or more trips past the school daily. Apparently over the years locals in Whitefield have asked NHDOT [the New Hampshire Department of Transportation] for a sidewalk so the school children could



Casella Waste Systems' truck routes to a proposed in Dalton, pictured here in a company traffic study, has drawn concern by some residents and school board officials about traffic safety near Whitefield and Bethlehem elementary schools. (Courtesy image)

walk to school ... As I understand it, DOT has determined it is not a safe enough section of road for that to happen, and now there is a proposal for what seems more like interstate-level tractor-trailer traffic on the very section of road."

Route 3 from Carroll to Whitefield is used for busing children to school and Route 116 from Littleton to Whitefield is used during the day for White Mountains Regional High School career and technical education students to travel be-

tween WMRHS and Littleton High School, said Odell.

"I think this is a major safety concern for our students, their families, staff and all others that visit our school district," he said.

"The other portion of the preferred trucking route has trucks coming in from I-91, traveling 93 south to exit 40 past the Bethlehem Elementary School then on to Route 3," said Odell. "There is also a strong possibility that trucks will also pass by the Littleton Elementary School which is on Union St (Route 116). So we have potential impacts on SAUs 36, 35 and 84 and it seems there has been no conversation about this and no one is looking out for our North Country school children, families and staff."

Writing on Thursday to the SAU 36 school board, SAU 36 Superintendent Marion Anastasia, and NHDOT Commissioner Frank Edelblut was Bonnie Boswell, of Whitefield, whose family has owned a home on Forest Lake for six decades.

She included for the board a letter she wrote to all 424 members of the New Hampshire Legislature in support of House Bill 177, which seeks to prohibit any new or expanding landfill within two miles of a state park by creating a two-mile buffer around the parks.

"Like most people, I am aware that we need landfills," wrote Boswell. "That is not the issue. For me, the issue is placement. To damage the lakes, rivers, wetlands and forest areas in our state that we have set aside for our families and tourists is very offensive to me. Certainly, we can come up with a better plan."

In addition to concern for the land, she said she

See **Fear**, Page 15

SAU 36: School Board Hears Landfill Traffic Concerns

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

WHITEFIELD — Truck traffic and child safety were discussed during the White Mountains Regional SAU 36 School Board meeting on Monday evening.

John Swan, of Dalton, a vocal opponent of a proposed landfill by Forest Lake, warned that trash-hauling routes would divert 100 tractor trailers past Whitefield Elementary School on a daily basis, posing a threat to students, parents and staff.

He asked the school board to weigh in. "It's your job as school board members to do what's best for the children," he said.

However, faced with pressing educational issues, school board members hesitated to commit time and resources to

the matter.

SAU 36 must switch from a two-day hybrid learning model to a five-day in-person model by April 19, under order of Gov. Chris Sununu, and they must convene a study committee to review Carroll's proposed withdrawal from the district by May 8.

"We have two significantly important education-related issues in front of us, with definite time clocks attached to them," said School Board Member Kristen Van Bergen, advising the board not to "embark on a significant study regarding the traffic route."

School Board Member Herb Randall concurred.

"It seems like it's not really school board business, because there are all the other things we have on our plate right now," he said.

Ultimately, the School Board referred the matter to its Facilities Committee for

further review.

That decision was preceded by spirited public debate, with some in attendance disputing Swan's claims.

Scott Kleinschrodt, of Dalton, a past school board member, accused Swan of promoting "conspiracy theories" and "fear mongering."

"I am concerned that an individual is trying to engage the school board into a political battle that will no doubt muddy your reputation," he said. "All we have here is an individual who is trying to throw mud on every wall he can trying to see where it might stick."

Dave Leonard of Whitefield, a professional truck driver with more than 25 years and 2 million "accident free" miles to his credit, took offense to claims that trained, licensed commercial drivers were "a danger" to public health.



Jon Swan, founder of Save Forest Lake, addresses the White Mountains Regional SAU 36 School Board on Monday, April 5. Swan warned that a proposed landfill posed a traffic hazard for Whitefield Elementary School. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

See **Concerns**, Page 15

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**Multi-Unit
Apartment
Building Fire**

Littleton Fire responded to an apartment fire at 62 Pleasant St. in Littleton at approximately 8:15 p.m. Saturday, April 3.

The occupant of the affected apartment was awoken by a smoke detector and escaped to safety.

Residents of other apartments were evacuated.

The fire was quickly extinguished and one person was transported to Littleton Regional Healthcare for evaluation.

Also responding were Bethlehem, Lisbon, Sugar Hill and Whitefield Fire also responded.

(Photo By Paul Hayes)



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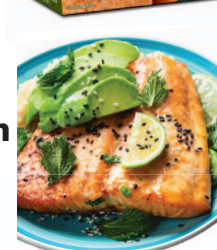
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News Briefs

State Commits To Littleton Main Street Reconstruction Phase 2

LITTLETON — After a number of years in the works, the proposed \$6.3 million reconstruction of the second phase of Main Street, from the Littleton Diner to Meadow Street, now has a committed partner.

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation has committed to be a co-applicant with the town on grant applications for state and federal funding.

“We’re hopeful the funding will come through,” Katelyn Robinson, director of economic development for Northern Community Investment Inc., which is assisting the town with grant applications, said Tuesday. “The town is applying for a couple of different grants for this project. Our next steps are to get these grant applications submitted. They still have some time before there is a solid green light to move forward, but we are optimistic these funds will be approved. This has been a long time in making.”

Discussions about the second phase of reconstruction began soon after the first phase, from the Littleton Diner to the Littleton Opera House, was completed in 2010.

The town is looking at several funding sources for phase II - the largest share, \$2.95 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration; \$500,000 through a Community Development Block Grant through the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority; \$700,000 from NHDOT; and a \$2.133 million town share.

Littleton will also seek a grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission.

For the town share, Littleton will be able to leverage some of the \$6 million that voters authorized several years ago for sewer and water infrastructure improvements in what is called the Sub-area 2 part of town.

The grant applications for second-phase Main Street reconstruction have deadlines during the next several months, said Robinson.

If all goes well, funding could be committed by this autumn, after which the town would embark on the project engineering, environmental work, final design, permitting, and acquisition of rights-of-way, all of which are expected to take about a year to complete, she said.

After that, construction could begin in the latter part of 2022 or early 2023.

Advancing Main Street phase II since he came on board as Littleton town manager in 2015 was Andrew Dorsett, who departed the town manager job in February to become an administrator for Grafton County.

“In the past, DOT had given letters of support,” he said. “What Littleton really needed was the commitment of the DOT to be a co-applicant on the grant application, which is a big step ... and signifies that unlike in times past where the NHDOT would provide a letter of support, they are now willing not just to be supportive, but actually partner with the town. This is something that we have been working on for years, and

Hiking Initiative Resumes Social Justice Push

Summits In Solidarity is back.

Launched last summer, the social justice effort is now accepting registrations for its second installment.

Those interested can visit SummitsInSolidarity.org and complete a sign-up sheet to choose their hiking destination.

Hike day is Saturday, June 26.

Summits In Solidarity was founded to support the BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) outdoors community.

Groups of hikers — BIPOC and white allies — will summit peaks across New Hampshire and elsewhere in a sign of, well, solidarity.

They will carry with them signs that say “Summits and Solidarity” (or other messages in support) and post photos to social media. The event aims to bring attention to, and promote acceptance of, non-white outdoorspeople.

Serena Ryan, owner of The Notch Hostel in North Woodstock, co-founded Summits In Solidarity following the death of George Floyd. The inaugural event drew over 50 hiking parties.

This year’s event aims to attract more.

“Summits in Solidarity’s first event occurred last June in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and the ensuing worldwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice. Since then, a lot of people with the privilege to leave conversations about race have done so. But the conversation has not stopped. It has expanded. And it’s never too late to rejoin it,” Ryan said.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Participants are encouraged to make donations.

This year funds will go towards two recipients: Keegan Supple and the Cowsuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki People.

Supple is an 18-year old freeskiier from Brentwood and the first participant in the NH PANTHER’s Black Excellence Fund and Storytelling Project. The Cowsuck Band have worked to save and preserve indigenous and sacred places.

Donations can be made at gofundme.com/f/summits-in-solidarity-2021-fundraiser

The inaugural event raised \$8,500 for Outdoor Afro, an organization dedicated to connecting black people with nature.

MORE THAN WORDS

To ensure it was more than “performative activism,” Ryan also required last year’s participants to make commitments to self-education, financial support and community actions.

This year, participants are asked to educate themselves on systemic racism, and white participants are encouraged to complete the 28-day “Me and White Supremacy” challenge.

Being white, Ryan admitted to making mistakes when she launched the initiative.

During last year’s burgeoning social justice movement, she said, she sometimes learned lessons the hard way. Still, she said, she pressed forward.

She called the work vital. And, with police officer, Derek Chauvin on trial for Floyd’s murder, it remains as vital as ever.

In December she wrote, “The past six months have been a humbling experience for me and my small organization. I dove head first into self-education, community engagement, and partnership work surrounding racial justice issues, including diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outdoors. The Notch Hostel and our racial justice initiative, Summits in Solidarity, are now part of a new collective of social justice organizations in New Hampshire’s North Country, and we are continuing to do work every day to dismantle White supremacy and uplift BIPOC outdoor enthusiasts in New Hampshire’s White Mountains.”

Sugar Hill Could Power All Town Buildings With Solar

Sugar Hill could soon have all of its municipal buildings and street lights powered by the sun, and with a substantial cost savings during the next decades.

A solar array project that has been advancing for several years will go to a town meeting vote on May 11.

In a report completed by Sugar Hill resident, Carl Martland, the array that would be located on the south-facing hillside behind the town garage comes with a projected lifetime cost savings of more than \$180,000 over 30 years.

“It would provide energy over the course of the year that is roughly equivalent to the amount of energy of all the buildings and street lights,” Martland said Monday.

Article 15 asks to see if the town will vote to raise \$83,000 for a bond/loan for the installation, including a first-year payment of \$17,000.

The town already has \$7,500 in a capital reserve fund to go toward the total \$90,000 purchase.

The loan for the \$83,000 balance carries a 1.9-percent interest rate and can be paid off in five years at a cost of \$17,500 annually.

Benefits include a clean, renewable source of energy, long solar array life and low maintenance, reduced payments for electricity to the tune of \$4,000 a year initially and more than \$135,000 over 30 years, renewable energy

credits of about \$1,300 a year initially and more than \$45,000 over 30 years, and reduced taxes, Martland said in his report.

The 94-panel array to be installed by 603 Solar would produce 48,000 kilowatt hours a year.

The total project cost over the 30-year life is estimated at \$120,000, which includes about \$1,000 in annual maintenance and insurance.

Selectmen took a big step toward the project during their meeting on Jan. 18, when Martland gave them options for a municipal solar array, to include financing options. The board expressed it would like to move forward with a warrant article.

On Jan. 25, Selectman Margo Connors shared three bids for the solar project and was expect-

See **News Briefs**, Page 7

A Bethlehem auto body shop was destroyed by a fire on Monday. The fire at Hollow Auto Body, 1121 Maple St. was reported at around 12:30 p.m. and the two-bay garage was fully involved when firefighters arrived. Bethlehem Fire were assisted by Littleton, Sugar Hill, Twin Mountain and Whitefield. The fire was contained to the original structure and the neighboring house was not damaged. No injuries were reported and the cause remains under investigation. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

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Continued from Page 6

ing one more bid. The town also contacted the bank for a five-year interest rate.

During the Feb. 1 budget hearing, Connors said the board would finalize a choice the following week for an installer to hire if the warrant article passes.

During their meeting on Feb. 8, Selectman John Strasser made a motion to hire 603 Solar as the contractor if the article passes, and the board reworked the article to reduce the bond/loan to \$83,000.

Although some schools and municipalities lease solar arrays, the town of Sugar Hill would own its array.

“Margo Connors has been actively pushing for ways to conserve energy and reduce energy costs for a long time, and this idea for the solar array came within the last couple of years,” said Martland, who serves on the board of directors of the Ammonoosuc Regional Energy Team.

ARET is made up of citizens from Bethlehem, Franconia, Littleton and Sugar Hill who encourage and support energy conservation projects and practices to save energy costs and benefit the environment through carbon footprint reduction.

The group was involved in the successful warrant article to outfit Profile School in Bethlehem with a solar array to power the school’s energy needs, and is also involved in the municipal solar array proposal for the town of Bethlehem, the residents of which will vote on that warrant article at Bethlehem’s town meeting in June.

For Sugar Hill’s municipal needs, Martland said well over half of the energy will be produced during the summer.

Selling the energy to the grid would net the town about 10 cents per kilowatt hour and buying it from Eversource Energy would cost about 18 cents per kilowatt hour, and while Sugar Hill won’t save on all of its energy costs, it will save a large chunk of it, he said.

Unit costs for installing solar arrays, too, have dropped significantly in the last half decade, said Martland.

If voters approve Article 15 at the May town meeting, the solar array could be installed this summer or fall, or early next spring at the latest, he said.

“For those in town who favor green energy and the environment, they’ll be happy, and for those who want to save on taxes, they’ll be happy, because over the life of the system you’re going to save money,” said Martland. “At town meeting, the town votes on capital reserve funds and we are going to put another \$50,000 for bridges and \$50,000 for roads. With this, you are talking about a \$90,000 investment, which can be financed at a very low interest rate and paid off in five years.”

Haverhill Hires New Police Chief

A former state trooper is Haverhill’s new top cop.

David Appleby was named the town’s Chief of Police last week and will start on April 12.

A 22-year veteran of the New Hampshire State Police, Appleby takes over for part-time Interim Chief Derek Sullivan, who led the department for the past five months.

“Appleby has been selected following an in-depth search and interview process. He was selected based on his extensive law enforcement experience and education that focused on leadership and criminal justice,” said Town Manager Brigitte Codling in a statement.

According to a press release, Appleby will emphasize community policing, and looks to build on the department’s strengths while bringing “fresh ideas” to boost its performance.

He aims to further develop and improve community relationships, while gaining a better understanding of the issues facing Haverhill, the press release added.

After graduation from Dawson College in Montreal, Appleby enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He attained the rank of sergeant and was honorably discharged in 1999. That year he attended the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Academy and was hired as a state trooper. He served his first year in the Haverhill area.

During his time with the state police, he was a SWAT trooper, a SWAT sniper team leader, a peer-to-peer counselor, a field training officer, and a troop armorer.

Appleby holds a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Phoenix University and a master’s degree in Leadership from Granite State College.

“Appleby has significant experience in leading and training personnel in tactical and interpersonal scenarios and hopes to impart his knowledge and experience to his Department, building a strong, supportive team culture to serve the community with a high degree of professionalism treating all with dignity and respect while enforcing the rules, regulations, and laws of the Town of Haverhill and State of New Hampshire,” said Codling in a statement.

Details Coming On UCVH, Indian Stream Merger

Coos County and Northeast Kingdom residents will soon have the opportunity to learn more about the proposed merger of Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital and Indian Stream Health Center.

A public listening session is scheduled for next week.

From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, a remote meeting through a Zoom webinar will take place to allow residents and patients to learn the details of the merger, which the boards of directors of both institutions voted to pursue in February, and how representatives of both institutions say it will benefit the greater Colebrook/Canaan area.

If the merger is approved, UCVH, located in Colebrook, will continue to be run as a critical access hospital.

The merger would establish a Rural Health Clinic (RHC) at ISHC’s Colebrook location, and that RHC would run as an outpatient behavioral health program and a Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program.

CLOSE TO HOME

Time Flies



BY MEGHAN MCCARTHY MCPHAUL

This week, my oldest offspring selected classes for their first year of high school. Even as I type that sentence, I can hardly wrap my mind around it: two of my children will be high schoolers in a few short months, and my baby a middle schooler. No matter that two of them are now taller than I am, and the third is gaining on me quickly, I can still picture all three as newborns, toddlers, little kids.

I don’t think I would say I miss the days of tending to infants or preschoolers or any other bygone stage of my children’s younger years. I have loved each of my children – and gotten to know them – through the progression of their childhoods. Despite the trials of the “terrible twos” and the “sassy sixes” and the excessive eye rolling that happens in my house these days, I’ve enjoyed most parts of every phase of their growing up.

When I look at photos from years past, or when we’re sitting around swapping “Remember When” stories, it is easy to feel nostalgic, though I don’t have any desire to go back in time. Contemplating the tiny, chubby-cheeked, big-eyed kids in those photos, however, makes me realize – again and again – how quickly these years pass by.

It really wasn’t all that long ago that I had three kids under the age of 3. Then three preschoolers, then three in elementary school. Back when they were all in diapers – and pretty much dependent on me for everything – someone told me, “The days are long, but the years are short.” Whoever first uttered that adage obviously had raised children.

These days, I sometimes feel a sense of woeful panic at how few years of childhood my children have left. Four more years. That’s what remains until my older two move on to whatever comes after high school. A mere four years ago, they were in the midst of their elementary school years, and four years from now, they’ll be legal adults. It doesn’t seem possible – to me or to them.

One of my children has said to me several times lately, “It seems like time is passing by so quickly.” And it’s no wonder. These middle school years are the bridge between

being a little kid and becoming an almost-grownup. My teenagers are newly and acutely aware that childhood has an expiration date, even if the exact deadline is obscure.

I have a clear memory of an 11-year-old me sitting with a friend on a summer afternoon, days before we entered middle school, and saying to her that it felt like time was flying by, that soon we’d be in high school, then college, then who-knows-where.

In that moment, that looming change seemed overwhelming. I could see adulthood on the horizon, even as it was still years away.

She laughed, and a few minutes later, we were off again, riding our bikes through the hazy summer day, as carefree as the children we still were. That’s the mercurial nature of this time in my children’s lives – one moment thoughtfully considering some serious responsibility, the next playing a silly made-up game with friends or siblings.

I can also clearly remember the anxiety of dropping my kids off at preschool for the first time, then at kindergarten in the “big school” a couple of years later. Even back then, I thought, “How are they so big already?!” Sometimes, still, it feels as if just last week they were so small I could snuggle all three together in my lap. I can’t imagine how I’ll feel when they step out into the great big world all on their own.

And so I keep reminding myself – in the moments when I’m facing eye-rolling, contrary, children in the process of growing up – that these days may sometimes seem long, but the years are as short as ever. I bask in the happy times we spend together and in our shared adventures. I try to offer advice and comfort in those moments when these children of mine feel stressed or sad or worried. I strive – not always successfully – to keep my temper when they push buttons and boundaries. And when one of them needs a hug, I lean in and hold on, for as long as they want, until they let go.

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

In a joint statement issued in February, UCVH board chair Odette Crawford and ISHC board chair Gail Fisher said, “Aligning the missions of ISHC, UCVH, and North Country Healthcare [of which UCVH is a member hospital] to continue to offer our area high-quality primary care, outpatient behavioral health serves, and access to affordable medications has been the goal of the discussions we have had over the past several

months.”

A formal letter of intent will be developed and any merger must first be approved by the Charitable Trust Unit of the Office of the New Hampshire Attorney General.

ISHC, a designated Federally Qualified Health Center, has a second site in Canaan.

UCVH is a 16-bed hospital serving 20 communities and more than 8,000 patients,

ACROSS

- 1 Whaler of fiction
5 Custards
10 Salmon variety
14 Wealthy, in Madrid
15 Tybalt's slayer
16 Maraud
17 Deborah of old films
18 Computer-chip maker
19 Ocean flyer
20 Bill passer
22 Meals
24 Botanist's study
26 Bathroom item
27 Long-eared animals
29 Talk
34 Flusters
35 "— Street Blues"
36 Hole puncher
37 — up (pay)
38 Eccentric
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40 Beluga delicacy
41 Drifters
42 Split to join
43 A Great Lake
45 Visit often
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47 Pitchers
49 Hybrid citrus
53 Quit marching
56 Beside oneself
57 Dolt
59 Sweeping, as a story
61 Hamilton-Burr clash
62 They wrote in runes
63 Nevada city
64 Mail event
65 Money-hunger
66 Strike one as

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DOWN

- 1 Commodious ship
2 Speeds off
3 Piece of land
4 Book about Elsa (2 wds.)
5 Curly corn chips
6 Individualist
7 CPA's sum
8 — do-well
9 Earnestly
10 Invent
11 Galley movers
12 Clue
13 Ben Jonson works
21 Yeasty brews
23 Improve the road
25 Spot remover
27 Asian capital
28 Cortes foe
30 Horse feed
31 Polyester partner
32 Cleaned house
33 Otherwise
34 Rural business
35 Ali —
38 Bewildering
39 Gustly winds
41 Bee colony
42 Rank below marquis
44 Bargain
45 Like some arguments
48 "— idea was that?"
49 Smidgens
50 Water, in Baja
51 Year-end tune
52 Scent
54 Dueler's weapon
55 Enjoy a banquet
58 Umbrage
60 Web suffix

Gerard Rene Fournier

Gerard Rene Fournier, 81, Maple Street, Bethlehem, N.H., died on April 1, at the Littleton Regional Hospital after a long battle with Dementia and Parkinson's Disease. He was born in Newport, Vt., the son of Arcade and Alexandrine (Jacques) Fournier.

Jerry, as he was fondly called, worked several jobs in his lifetime but was really a self-taught carpenter and loved working with wood and would often make things for family and friends. His parents came from Canada and as an interesting tidbit, when he started school he did not know a word of English as his parents did not speak anything but French.

He was a devout Catholic and a parishioner of St. Rose of Lima Church. He rarely missed going to church until he was too weak to attend. He was a gentle soul and will be missed by the many who loved him. Rest in Peace my love. Jerry was the youngest of 10 children; three of them passed before him.

He is survived by his loving wife of 32 years Yvonne (Verny), her children David, Timothy, and Tracy who he loved dearly. He also had four boys from a previous marriage; Richard, Raymond, Roger and Mickey who he pretty much raised.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Friday, April 9, 11 a.m., at the St. Rose of Lima Church with Father Mark Dollard officiating. Donations may be made in Jerry's memo-



Gerard Fournier

Obituaries

ry to Littleton Regional Healthcare, 600 St. Johnsbury Road, Littleton, NH 03561. The Ross Funeral Home has the privilege of these arrangements. To offer your condolences to the family please visit www.rossfuneral.com.

Brian Scott Brooks

Brian Scott Brooks, 43, of Gilman, Vt. passed away at his home on Sunday, March 28, 2021.

Brian was born in St. Johnsbury, Vt. on Oct. 24, 1977 to Gary and Gail (Mackay) Brooks. He attended St. Johnsbury Academy graduating with the Class of 1996. Brian worked as a Machine Operator for New England Wire. A New England sports fan, Brian rooted for the Boston Bruins, the Red Sox, and the Celtics but also the NY Giants.

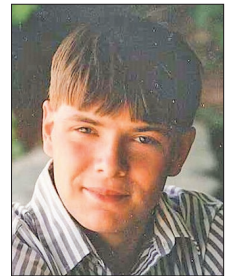
Once a friend, Brian was always a friend. He could overlook anyone's faults and open his heart to them. His parents' wish is for all who knew Brian to practice his ability to not judge people by their faults, only their abilities.

Survivors include his parents: Gary and Gail Brooks of Gilman, Vt.; a daughter: Addiah Daine of Lisbon, N.H.; his grandmother: Claire Shatney of Lyndonville, Vt.; brother: Richard Brooks and wife, Heidi, of Groveton, N.H.; sister: Michelle Brault and husband, Eric, of Bloomfield, Vt.; and several aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

There will be no services at this time.

Donations in Brian's name can be made to Groveton Cal Ripken, c/o Passumpsic Bank, 40 State Street, Groveton, NH 03584.

Memories and condolences may be shared with the family at saylesfh.com.



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Deceased Couple Donates \$144,000 To Fish And Game

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Clarence and Gertrude Sleeper, of Littleton, loved nature and the outdoors.

During their lives, they traveled, hiked, enjoyed the wildlife of New England, and stayed physically active.

On Dec. 15, 2019, their lives ended tragically in what state prosecutors determined was a murder-suicide, which came after both had incurred health issues and limited mobility.

Though gone, their generosity endures.

On March 24, the New Hampshire Executive Council authorized New Hampshire Fish and Game to accept \$144,000 in total donations from the estate of Clarence W. Sleeper to serve NFHG's K-9 program and endangered wildlife program.

Without contributions from generous donors, neither program could survive.

"That was a substantial donation and a complete surprise to us," said NHFG Col. Kevin Jordan, Fish and Game's top law enforcement officer.

NHFG K-9 teams - with a new puppy brought into the fold, there are now four teams in the state, made up of a human handler and a canine with a keen nose - serve a vital function.

They save lives during search-and-rescue missions and find missing persons, from stranded hikers to elderly people with dementia, and also assist in criminal investigations.

State police and local police departments depend on NHFG K-9s.

"These dogs have been responsible for finding people," said Jordan. "Everybody uses them."

The NHFG K-9 program runs entirely on corporate and private donations, which pay for training, care, and food as well as the specialized equipment installed in a truck to safely accommodate a dog.

"We have two new K-9 cruisers coming and you have to outfit those cruisers with equipment that is very expensive," said Jordan. "I'm adamant about putting the money where donors want it and this came at just the right time to help us cover that cost."

Called a "hot dog" unit, the equipment turns on the air condition during summers and the heat on during winters, and those activations can take place remotely on a cell phone by a K-9 handler who might be away from the truck, but who can receive a message from a temperature monitor inside the truck indicating the temperature for the canine has hit the danger point in either direction.

"If a guy's held up and can't get back to the truck, it sends an alert on a cell phone," said Jordan. "It's a very sophisticated piece of equipment that guarantees your dog will be safe even when you're held up ... Outfitting those two cruisers with systems like that costs a substantial amount of money and that donation will help us greatly in doing that. This is very generous."

Most donors Jordan is able to thank personally, but he said it saddens him that he is unable to do so in the case of donations from an estate, especially when it's among the higher donations, as is the Sleeper contribution, which is among the largest donations NHFG received for its K-9 program.

"We will make sure that whatever money is left over is used for the K-9 program," he said.

Of the total Sleeper donation, \$84,000 was dedicated to NHFG's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, established in 1988 to monitor and manage more than 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians not hunted, trapped or fish, as well as monitor and manage thousands of insect species.

The program also provides outreach and education and works with other state agencies on conservation strategies.

"For the Nongame Program, donations are a critical source of our annual budget and help fuel all of our programs and conservation efforts," said Michael Marchand, supervisor for the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. "Private donations are also needed to

match and acquire additional sources of state and federal funds. The Sleeper Estate was one of our largest Nongame Program donations to date and will be extremely helpful in implementing priority conservation efforts across the state and implementing the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan."

The wildlife action plan, first available in 2005 and updated in 2015, guides conservation efforts for species of greatest conservation need.

The Sleepers' contribution was not targeted to a specific project, and so will be used to support all of the different functions and conservation projects implemented by the non-game program, he said.

"A few of our ongoing projects include monitoring and management of threatened and endangered species, including piping plover, Karner blue butterfly, and New England cottontail, working with private landowners to implement conservation actions for Blanding's turtles, spotted turtles, and wood turtles, and development of a statewide wildlife corridors map," said Marchand.

The Sleepers earmarked their donation to both the K-9 program and endangered wildlife program specifically and had knowledge of them.

"These programs definitely make a difference in people's lives and we wouldn't have them without the generous donations," he said.

Clarence Webster "Web" Sleeper, who was 85, and Gertrude Sleeper, who was 84, were New Hampshire natives who were married in Littleton in 1957.

Clarence served in the military, was deployed to Korea, and became an expert in Morse Code.

After returning to New Hampshire, both Clarence and Gertrude began careers with the New England Tel. and Tel. Co.

According to their obituary, "Throughout the years, one did not see Web and Gert without one of their three beloved dogs. They had a passion for nature, gardening and travel. Web was an avid skier, and he and Gert enjoyed cross-country skiing together. In retirement, they traveled from Littleton through Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont and many other states taking in the history of each state together with the beauty of our national parks and forests on their way to Alaska. Their trip to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island was a highlight to their travel experiences ... Their gardens kept them busy with canning and freezing fruits and vegetables for the winter. The deer and wildlife in their backyard always made the day more beautiful."

A neighbor of the Sleepers is Ruth Taylor, who lives in the Hilltop

Manor Mobile Home Park and who called them a very friendly and devoted couple.

On Thursday, Taylor, who once ran Littleton Main Street Inc., said their donation to NHFG is "wonderful."

"They were very well-liked and were thoughtful of other people," she said. "When I did the Main Street program, I ran into them because they cared very much about what was going on in the community."

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News Briefs

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including those in Vermont and Maine.

The Zoom webinar on Wednesday is limited to the first 1,000 participants.

Questions can be submitted during the webinar in written format.

For webinar login and call-in information, visit the UCVH and ISHC websites.

Planners Approve 12 More Cabins At Presidential Mountain Resort

The Bethlehem Planning Board on Wednesday unanimously approved the site plan for 12 overnight cabins at Presidential Mountain Resort along Route 302, in a project that also includes removing the long-vacant and deteriorating restaurant building.

Traffic flow could also be impacted along that segment of highway by possibly reducing the speed limit — currently 40 mph — and installing a crosswalk.

The pre-fabricated Amish-style rosewood cabins, to be installed this spring on the north side of Route 302, will be in addition to the 15 existing PMR cabins on the south side of the state highway.

The entire PMR property, at 1108 Main St./Route 302, is owned by Yizchok Rudich, who bought it five years ago.

The new cabins, part of a 42-acre expansion, will go on the north side site area that had been designated for a five-story, 85-room, high-end Hilton hotel.

“The Hilton Hotel was too costly, \$20 million,” Rudich’s engineer, David Eckman, told planners. “The numbers didn’t work over time. He feels like his operation now is working pretty good ... With the cabins, it will be financially viable, a successful business, which is what he wants.”

Rudich has retained a traffic engineer, who had worked on the Hilton hotel proposal, and discussions have included reducing the speed limit and installing a yellow light or crosswalk.

“He’s working directly with the state and making a request to see if they would consider slowing the speed, allowing a yellow light, and possibly a crosswalk,” said Eckman. “We’re not sure we’ll win that fight, but we’re trying. The fire chief would like it, the police would like it, and I believe you guys mentioned in the past that you would like us to slow the traffic down through there a little bit if we could. But it is a DOT [New Hampshire Department of Transportation] road and we’re trying and that is in process.”

With the exception of two smaller studio cabins, 10 of the 12 cabins are 24- by 28-feet with two bedrooms and a loft.

The plan is to put more space between the new cabins than what there had been with the original cabins, he said.

The cabins will be connected to Bethlehem Village District water system.

In answer to questions about wetland im-

Trail Finder Works To Add NEK And Coös County Recreation Opportunities

Recreation opportunities abound in the Northeast Kingdom and North Country — but finding information about lesser-known trails can be difficult.

Trail Finder (trailfinder.info) is a unique online portal covering both Vermont and New Hampshire with the intent to share verified and up-to-date information about a wide variety of land and water trails.

Trail Finder develops relationships with the manager for each trail — be they town, state, federal, business, land trust, non-profit or private citizen — and works directly with them to provide visitors the best possible information.

Though the site began in Vermont in 2006, it expanded to include New Hampshire about six years ago. A concentrated effort over the past two years has added many Coös county and Northeast Kingdom trails.

“There are a lot of trails websites out there and there’s a lot of crowdsourced information that’s really unreliable,” said Claire Polfus, project manager for Trail Finder. “Not only could it be bad for the trail itself, but also unsafe for people using it.”

The site is administered by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) with many partners: the Center for Community GIS (CCGIS), the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation (FPR), UNH Cooperative Extension, and the National Park Service.

“We really take pride in focusing on the relationships with the people who are taking care of the trails,” said Polfus, who herself lives in the Northeast Kingdom. “All of our trails are approved by their managers. So hopefully we

have the best information available.”

The above organizations work together to identify and verify opportunities across the two states, with support also coming from private and public funders.

It’s a huge job, for sure, to get in touch with the manager for each listing.

“That commitment takes time,” Polfus said. “Users will ask us to add trails and we put it on our list ... but it can take a while depending on the land manager.”

For example, Trail Finder is still in the process of getting trails in the White Mountain National Forest up on their site.

Once a listing is up, Trail Finder continues that relationship with the land manager to understand and publish what is happening on the ground with trail conditions. While listings aren’t guaranteed to be 100 percent accurate all the time due to lags in communication, they are pretty close.

For each trail, the website lists a description, elevation gain, distance, map, directions, the trail manager’s contact information, current weather, trail alerts, services ... and even a link to nearby geocaches.

Trailside services, a newer aspect, are any business — restaurants, campgrounds, gear shops, breweries — close to the trail. Currently, businesses can add themselves for free.

While trailside services are the focus of recent efforts, so are Coös county trails, especially those above Route 2. Funding from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation’s Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund has supported efforts to add trails in that area, a former blank spot on Trail Finder’s map.

In Coös, Polfus notes that Mount Jasper in Berlin is a cool city-managed trail with a great view, as well as the Colebrook River Walk loop along the Mohawk and Connecticut Riv-

ers.

Polfus says her location in the Northeast Kingdom has really helped her understand and explore the trails, though certainly some are missing.

Polfus says there are some really great accessible trail options in the NEK, which FPR and the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge have been working hard to add.

Trail Finder also worked with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to add paddle trip suggestions around Newport, on the Black and Barton Rivers.

Kingdom Trails, however, is not on the map.

“People know about Kingdom Trails at this point,” Polfus said. “One of the things we really try and do is try and create opportunities for places that aren’t so well known ... it’s more for people who maybe come up here and might want other opportunities to supplement their visit to Kingdom Trails.”

She said Trail Finder’s focus on lesser-known recreation opportunities has been particularly helpful for people during the past year.

“We want to show the whole variety of trails that are available to people living in these two states or visiting these two states,” she added.

During the pandemic, Polfus and the team have worked hard to update trail and business listings with COVID-19 safety or closure information.

One week ago, as the annual mud season trail closures in Vermont began, Trail Finder was updated right away.

Polfus says that if people have a trail suggestion, Trail Finder is always happy to look into it and work to add it to their system.

CCGIS, which Polfus works for, also runs Maine Trail Finder.

it, but they won’t sell it. I don’t know what’s going to happen.”

As for the former restaurant on the south side of Route 302 beside Miller Pond, Eckman has been in talks with Bethlehem Fire Chief Jack Anderson about the building’s removal.

“The fire chief gave us a big push in fixing the restaurant,” said Eckman. “It’s going to go away soon.”

For decades, before it became Presidential Mountain Resort, the 150-acre property was known as the Baker Brook restaurant and cabins, before that operation ceased and its buildings and cabins fell into disrepair in the 1980s.

Rudich has since removed the old, dilapidated cabins to make way for the new.

For planning board member, Marie Stevenson, the property brings back a lot of memories.

“This is a great project,” she said. “I think I’m the only one anywhere in this building [town hall] who worked in the restaurant and did all the chamber-maiding in all the cabins. For me, I’m totally excited. I can’t wait to see it when you’re all done.”

Rudich’s long-range goal is to install 36 or more PMR cabins on the north side, with the 12 approved this week making up the first

phase.

Vandals Target Youth Organization, Fundraiser Formed In Response

The vans were vandalized.

Now the community is rallying to help.

A fundraiser was launched Thursday, April 1, to assist the Boys & Girls Club of the North Country, which had catalytic converters ripped from two extended cab passenger vans.

Within six hours, the campaign had raised \$9,800, exceeding its \$7,500 goal.

Donations will go towards van repairs and maintenance, as well as the installation of a video security system and additional outdoor lighting to prevent further such crimes.

To give visit m.facebook.com/donate/823135671627482

The fundraiser was started by Dayna Flumerfelt, a member of the BGCNC Board of Directors, who felt compelled to act.

“As a Board member of the Club, when I saw the news, I knew something needed to be done.

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Knowing what we've been through in the past year with all the COVID challenges and our fundraising events being canceled, I figured a fundraiser would be a good way to cover the costs associated with what happened," she said, adding, "[The] only way to cancel out something so awful happening to such a great organization is with kindness, love, and support — which I'm grateful the North Country has plenty of."

Sara Shovlin, executive director of the BGCNC, said the vandalism was discovered on Tuesday.

The 12-passenger vans are typically used to transport kids for after-school programs and field trips.

Fortunately, in response to COVID challenges, the Boys & Girls Club has contracted with outside transportation providers for its after-school program since re-opening on March 22. That has allowed them to continue uninterrupted.

However, the vans will be pressed into service once summer programming kicks off, and will resume after-school transportation in the fall.

"During the school year when it's not COVID [the vans] are used every single day to pick up our members. And during the summer program we'll definitely be using them for field trips, and getting the kids out in the community," Shovlin said.

It is unknown when the vandalism occurred.

In total, three vans were struck. The third belonged to a contractor who was installing a commercial kitchen at the club. Catalytic converter theft has been on the rise nationwide, with several incidents reported across the North Country in the past year.

The matter is being investigated by Lisbon Police.

It adds to a series of challenges for the Boys & Girls Club during COVID.

The club was closed for approximately eight of the past 12 months due to the pandemic. They re-opened last month with less than half the enrollment and double the staffing as pre-COVID, in order to follow COVID safety protocols.

Those enrollment limits and staffing requirements are expected to remain in place through the summer.

That means less income and more salary, not to mention the additional COVID costs for transport, personal protective equipment, and hand sanitizer.

Fortunately, the Boys & Girls Club was able to access state COVID relief funds through the Child Care Recovery and Stabilization Program (CCRSP) to offset lost revenue and a lack of fundraising.

"Of course it takes just as much money to operate a program for less kids so we were really fortunate that we were able to secure [CCRSP funds]," Shovlin said. "It definitely hurts the budget when you have to double the number of people working for half the amount of kids."

Moving forward, it remains unclear how willing families will be to send students to after-school and summer youth programs, through the Boys & Girls Club, town recreation depart-

ments, or other outlets.

Despite decreasing its after-school program slots from 72 to "about 30," the Boys & Girls Club accepted all applicants this spring, with no waiting list required. That reflected hesitancy among some households.

"We've had a few families that have been on the fence. That have signed up, and pulled back, and inquired again, and ultimately decided to pull the application. We see a few people that have kids in other extra-curricular activities and they're just trying to minimize the amount of places that they go after school. I think everyone's trying to cut back on potential exposure," Shovlin said.

Meanwhile, the Boys & Girls Club has gone to great lengths to ensure safety among its kids. They are separated into pods, follow standard COVID safety measures, and during the warmer weather, the club's campus along the Ammonoosuc River allows for adequate outdoor social distancing.

Welcoming them back last month, Shovlin was encouraged.

"It was really hard when we were closed thinking of those kids who are not in the best situations. But it definitely makes my heart full to see them down here and have a safe place to go, interacting with their peers," she said.

Dangerousness Hearing Scheduled In Franconia Bomb Threat Case

A hearing has been scheduled to determine if the woman accused of stalking a Franconia couple and planting explosive devices in their cars and at a courthouse poses an ongoing danger to herself and to others, and if so, if she should be committed to the state's secured psychiatric unit.

On March 23 at Grafton Superior Court, Mark Sisti, defense counsel for Grace Woodham, 31, of Conway, filed an evaluation, according to the case summary.

On the same day, Grafton County Attorney Marcie Hornick, on behalf of the state, filed an expedited motion for a dangerousness evaluation, which the next day was objected to by Sisti.

On March 25, the court issued an order.

All documents are under seal and their contents undetermined, but they did result in the court hearing now scheduled for June 17.

The new court filings and hearing come after a Jan. 12 court order in which a superior court judge stated that Hornick and Sisti agreed that there is clear and convincing evidence that Woodham cannot be restored within 12 months to mental competency in order to stand trial for her criminal charges, and an August 2020 report by psychiatrist Eric Drogin, who performed a competency and restorability evaluation of Woodham, supported that finding.

Accordingly, under RSA 135:17-a, the New Hampshire statute on the state hospital and insane persons, a defendant's criminal charges can be dismissed if he or she cannot be restored to competency within one year.

Under the law, however, if a court has determined that a defendant has not regained competency and poses a possible danger to self or

others, that court can order a person to remain in custody for up to 90 days to be evaluated for dangerousness and appropriateness of involuntary treatment.

The court is authorized to order the person to submit to examinations by a psychiatrist or psychologist designated by the state for the purpose of evaluating the appropriateness and completing a certificate for involuntary admission into the state mental health services system, the state developmental services delivery system, or the secured psychiatric unit.

Since 2019, Woodham has been held at the Grafton County House of Corrections on preventative detention after a judge in 2019 determined she posed a danger to herself and others.

Following the Jan. 12 court order, Drogin conducted a dangerousness evaluation and Sisti filed a motion for services for the evaluation.

Once Drogin submitted his report on the issue of dangerousness, the judge, in his order, stated that a hearing is to be scheduled.

For reasons of privacy, health records, including mental health records, are exempt from public disclosure under New Hampshire's right-to-know law.

Woodham's first arrest in Franconia came in May 2019, after several months of allegedly stalking the couple (the man is her alleged romantic interest).

She was charged with a felony criminal threatening for sending a letter via U.S. mail to Cannon Mountain and threatening to blow up the state-owned ski area, where one of the victims worked.

She was released, but arrested a few weeks later and charged with criminal contempt of court, two counts of stalking, resisting arrest, criminal trespass, and felony drug possession.

Search warrants detailed that bottle devices were found in the engine compartments of the couple's vehicles and state there is also evidence that Woodham entered their home while they were at Littleton District Court seeking a restraining order against her.

None of the devices in the vehicles or the device prosecutors said she planted at the courthouse while the couple was there detonated.

On Jan. 12, following Drogin's competency evaluation, the superior court dismissed 18 charges that included felony counts of criminal threatening, drug possession (heroin and crack cocaine), possession of an infernal machine (for allegedly planting a chemical-reaction bomb or similar device on the fire escape of Littleton courthouse), and false report of explosives, as well as misdemeanor counts of stalking, contempt of court, violating a restraining order, resisting arrest and criminal trespass.

Since her incarceration, Woodham, acting as her own attorney, has sued a number of state and county departments and individuals in federal and superior courts, alleging violations of civil rights and defamation.

Because Woodham has declared an economic hardship, court filing fees, totaling in the thousands of dollars, were waived.

At Carroll Superior Court, she sued the couple, her former defense attorney for malpractice, the Conway Police Department, and several police officers involved in her Franconia arrest.

At Grafton Superior Court, she sued the

Franconia couple individually for slander and defamation; psychiatrist Albert Drukteinis who examined her, for defamation; and the Grafton County House of Corrections for alleged violations of her civil rights.

Most of the superior court cases have since been dismissed, including a defamation suit filed against The Caledonian-Record at Carroll Superior Court.

On March 19, Judge Charles Greenhalgh granted the paper's motion to dismiss Woodham's complaint, which argued the Caledonian-Record "misrepresented my alleged criminal activity," "ignored my attempts to provide my corrections," and "propagated police perjury."

Wrote the judge, "The plaintiff cannot prevail on her claims as Caledonian's articles mentioning the plaintiff clearly fall within the protections of the fair report privilege. Each of the plaintiff's other claims against Caledonian are predicated upon and dependent upon her claim for defamation and therefore must also be dismissed. Plaintiff's complaint also fails to properly name Caledonian."

At the U.S. District Court of the District of New Hampshire, Woodham filed court actions against the GCHOC, the New Hampshire Department of Safety, Franconia police, the male victim.

In case entries in March, a federal judge wrote that the federal cases that had been pending are now stayed until the state court makes a determination as to whether Woodham should be civilly committed.

Dalton Police Shooting Report Contributes To Gilman Man Being Held Without Bail

A Gilman man is being held in jail without bail, partly because of the March 24 report on the officer-involved shooting in Dalton that identifies a house of "likely criminal activity" near a house where he would have lived as his case pends for an unrelated domestic assault.

On Friday, Essex Superior Court Judge Michael Harris, who spent about two hours delivering his findings and order, issued a ruling revoking the bail of Russell Matheson, 49, in a case that involves an alleged assault on Jan. 19 on his girlfriend, who is the ex-wife of Chris Landry.

Landry owns the Dalton home at 16 Bridge Hill Road near the Vermont border that Mark R. Clermont, 45, of Whitefield had visited less than a month earlier, on the night of Dec. 23, when he was pulled over for speeding by New Hampshire State Police Trooper Matthew Merrill.

Merrill, who followed Clermont into the driveway, was injured in a shootout with Clermont, a habitual offender who had his driver's license revoked and who had expressed to friends he would not be going to prison again if ever pulled over by police.

Clermont, who New Hampshire Department of Justice officials said fired first, was shot in the head by Merrill and died at the scene.

According to the report, which concludes

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News Briefs

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Merrill was legally justified in using deadly force, Clermont tried to gain access to a shed on the Landry property, but was denied entry by a brother of Chris Landry, who was inside.

On March 26, following the release of the NHDOJ report on the shooting, Essex County Attorney Vince Illuzzi filed a motion with the court to revoke bail for Matheson.

The motion included Merrill's statements to New Hampshire investigators about the Landry residence being one of criminal activity, statements that Illuzzi said are corroborated by the testimony of Essex County Sheriff Trevor Colby, who noted the residence has been "the focus of drug-related complaints."

After the Jan. 19 alleged assault at 48 Beech St. in Gilman village that Matheson and his girlfriend shared, the victim walked from that residence to her ex-husband's house in Dalton to call 911, wrote Illuzzi.

That created some initial confusion as to where the assault occurred and if it was in New Hampshire or Vermont.

In his March 26 motion, Illuzzi said the information in the shooting report and Colby's testimony "allow the court to take judicial notice of the fact of the likely availability of drugs and criminal activity at the Landry residence, a short walk from the residence of Howard and Linda Matheson, [Russell Matheson's] parents, to which [Matheson] again seeks to be released."

"The close proximity of the three residences to each other and the likely 'criminal activity' at the Landry residence are significant because [Matheson] has admitted to his mother that he is a drug addict and remains untreated in that regard," he wrote. "If released to his mother's residence, the Landry residence and his former residence are within walking distance."

In his motion, Illuzzi refers to several witnesses, including two of whom could testify about alcohol and drug use at the Gilman residence Matheson shared with his girlfriend and about a man staying there, Stephen Silsby, who "appeared impaired to the point that he tried, but failed to get up out of bed during the day-

time hours."

On Monday, Illuzzi told The Caledonian-Record it's rare that a judge denies bail based on the specific legal arguments he made for no bail in the Matheson case.

"It's very unusual to use that provision of the law," he said.

The NHDOJ was one piece in an ongoing series of arguments that Illuzzi said he had been building since about Feb. 17 in making his case to the court for no bail.

Weeks after his charge of felony domestic assault, Matheson was charged with 10 counts of violating conditions of his release and obstruction of justice, which came after Illuzzi said Matheson called the victim and tried to persuade her to not cooperate with him as the prosecutor.

Matheson is being held at the Northeast Correctional Complex, in St. Johnsbury, where things took an odd turn involving the jailhouse telephone calls to the victim and led to the additional charges.

"There were 137 calls from the jail to Roxy Haines," said Illuzzi. "Roxy is the name of his dog. That's the name he gave the jail so the court couldn't see he was violating the court's no-contact order. He told the victim not to take my calls and not to attend a hearing. That's obstruction. We could have charged him with 137 counts, but only charged him with 10 ... He went from being charged with domestic assault to being charged with 10 counts of violating conditions of release and obstruction."

According to the affidavit for arrest for the felony charge of aggravated second-degree domestic violence assault, Colby was notified of a domestic disturbance at 48 Beech St. in Gilman following the 911 call by Matheson's girlfriend that she made at her ex-husband's residence in Dalton.

"During the call, [the victim] reported that Matheson was at the Landry residence in Dalton and threatening to kill them," Colby wrote in the affidavit.

According to the victim's written statement to police, Matheson had hit her earlier with an object on the right side of her forehead, which showed visible injuries and swelling.

While assaults happened on more than one occasion, she told police she is seeking a restraining order.

After the alleged assault and while police were looking for Matheson, he allegedly texted the woman, stating "please don't put me in jail."

Matheson was arrested by sheriff's deputies after he returned to the Beech Street residence.

"Matheson advised that he is upset because he suspects [the victim] has been sleeping with her ex-husband lately, Christopher Landry," wrote Colby. "Matheson told Deputy Thomas something to the effect of wanting to 'kill that motherf****r (Landry) and 'Bash his face in.'"

Once in jail, Matheson allegedly violated the conditions of bail and obstructed justice when he made the phone calls to the victim between Feb. 17 and March 2, after the court ordered him to have no contact with her or Landry.

In reviewing the calls, Illuzzi, in a March 19 charging affidavit, wrote that he discovered Roxy was the name of his dog and recognized the voice in all of the calls as that of the victim.

"Matheson and [the victim] have been attempting to hide their communication with each other," he wrote.

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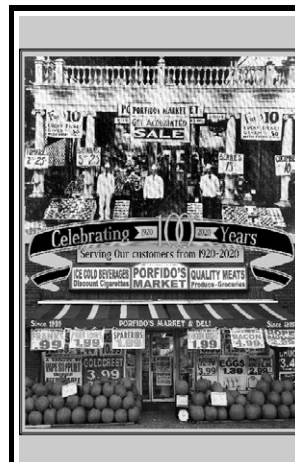
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Littleton High Automotive Technology Teacher Dan Brodien participates in a roundtable talk hosted by U.S. Rep. Ann Kuster on Wednesday.

Educators Reflect On COVID Challenges, Lessons

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

"That can't possibly happen."

That was Dan Brodien's reaction last March when rumors circulated that schools might close due to COVID-19.

"I've been a teacher for 18 years and I never, ever thought that that would happen," he said.

But it did happen.

Teachers were sent home and Brodien, an automotive technology instructor at Littleton High School, spent the spring teaching from his kitchen table.

It's an experience he doesn't want to repeat. Still, it made him a better educator, he said.

"I am a different teacher than I was a year ago. Even if we go back to 'normal,' as a teacher I think I've grown tenfold during COVID," Brodien said during a roundtable hosted by Congresswoman Ann Kuster on Wednesday.

That growth was organic. It arose out of necessity, he said.

When schools shut down in March 2020, Littleton staff were forced to go remote. For some, the learning curve was steep. They adapted as they went along, and figured out new ways to teach students.

"I didn't even know what Zoom was. Now I can effectively run Zoom meetings," Brodien said. "I'm an auto mechanics guy. I know more about running a dump truck than I do about making a web page. But now I have a class page where I'm communicating with 75 kids."

It was professional development, pandemic style.

Educators helped each other make adjustments,

adapt to new technologies, and continue their educational mission.

"It really was like a network of everybody helping everybody to move forward," he said. "I didn't gain this experience from going to a conference, or someone coming in. It was my neighbor who showed me 'This is how you attach a video to your web page.' I've done probably 10 years of learning in the last two years."

The pandemic changed the students, too.

"I think something happened to our students when they were home. They realized they actually want to be in school," he said. "They are excited to be here, and to do whatever they have to do to be here: Use hand sanitizer, wash every desk, wear facemasks."

Brodien and others talked about the resiliency of students as schools transitioned between remote, hybrid and in-person modes, and dealt with quarantines and other disruptive COVID-prevention measures.

"Have they learned like they would have were we in the classroom? Probably not. But have they learned? They sure have," said Nashua second-grade teacher, Michelle Quadros. "It's all about attitude. We can choose to focus on everything they lost or we can spin it positively and think about all the other skills they've learned."

She said federal funds through the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan relief package will help schools address pandemic-fueled problems — with mental health, food insecurity, and broadband access — as schools emerge from the pandemic.

"Fingers and toes crossed," she said.

COVID has been particularly challenging for some families and educators.

Chichester sixth-grade teacher, Christopher Gag-

non participated in Wednesday's call from quarantine, after his young daughter was identified as a close contact.

"We're awaiting test results," he said, noting the same issue has impacted many others in his district. "I have 19 kids in my class. Throughout the year we've had kids in and out because they've been exposed or they've been quarantined. They've had to go home. When they go home they pick up the live streaming. But the parents and the families, their entire routines have been turned upside down. And I'm experiencing that now. It's really difficult to find a babysitter for a toddler that's in quarantine."

The American Rescue Plan includes \$350 million for New Hampshire K-12 schools. Those funds will advance re-opening efforts, increase broadband access, and improve education services for at-risk youth.

Kuster struck an optimistic tone that, with the help of the American Rescue Plan, students will rebound from COVID setbacks.

"Our Granite State educators have been hard at work to ensure our students receive a high-quality education as we continue efforts to end this public health crisis," Kuster said. "The American Rescue Plan meets the demands of this moment and provides critical resources for our NH communities, including funding for our state's public K-12 schools to bolster after-school and summer learning, and expand access to broadband services and devices. It was great to hear first-hand from our public school educators and to discuss how the American Rescue Plan supports our K-12 schools, children, and working families. There's a lot of work to be done to recover and rebuild, and I thank all of our New Hampshire educators for their efforts to ensure no student is left behind."

Concerns

Continued from Page 3

Noting that he and his wife have 10 grandchildren, he said he was concerned for student safety, but said the number of trucks and the threat they posed were being exaggerated. He said existing traffic constituted a greater risk, noting that impatient motorists have illegally passed him while he has driven trucks through Whitefield.

“[Those motorists are] more of a threat than a professional driver that bases their income on abiding by the safety rules,” he said.

Despite those criticisms, Swan stood his ground.

He said his truck traffic projections were pulled from state Department of Transportation studies, and countered that Kleinschrodt was a landfill supporter whose bottom line concern was the tax rate.

“I hate to see my work misconstrued by somebody who has his own personal agenda, especially a financial agenda, whereas mine is purely altruistic for the love of the North Country and the North Country environment,” he said.

School Board Vice Chair James Brady, who heads the facilities committee, said traffic issues at Whitefield Elementary were worthy of

discussion, regardless of the proposed landfill’s fate.

Those issues are the result of traffic patterns, traffic volume, street crossings, and a lack of sidewalks in the area of the school, including sections of Route 3, Route 116 and Kings Square.

“I think the problem exists now whether there’s any more traffic or not,” Brady said.

Whitefield Elementary Principal Mike Cronin, who has been affiliated with the school for “well over 15 years,” noted that few students currently walk to the school.

He estimated that only a couple did so on a daily basis, and another did so intermittently.

“Historically, Whitefield School is not a walkable school because of the location. We do not see many, if any, students walk to Whitefield School,” he said.

CARROLL COMMITTEE

The formation of the Carroll Withdrawal Committee is underway.

The 10-member committee will include two representatives (a School Board and a Select Board member) from each SAU 36 community.

The School Board representation is set: James Murphy (Carroll), Greg Odell (Dalton), James Brady (Jefferson), Herb Randall (Lancaster), and Robert Loiacono (Whitefield).

Town appointees will be finalized by April

13. The Withdrawal Committee will review Carroll’s proposed exit from the regional school district. Under law, they must meet by May 8. They will have 180 days to submit a recommendation to the state Board of Education, unless more time is requested.

Carroll Town Meeting voted to initiate the withdrawal process last month. They are seeking to leave the district because of dissatisfaction with the apportionment formula.

COVID UPDATE

Second-dose vaccine clinics were held for SAU 36 staff on Saturday, and those employees should be fully protected from COVID-19 by April 17.

Lisa Miller, the district COVID coordinator, called it “a huge step in the right direction to keeping staff and students healthy.”

Meanwhile, with New Hampshire expanding vaccination eligibility to ages 16 and over, some White Mountains Regional High School juniors and seniors have secured vaccination appointments.

Miller called the news “incredibly exciting.”

Although there have been “disturbing trends” with variants of COVID spreading and case numbers rising, Miller said the pace of vaccinations — approximately 3 million per day — was reason for optimism.

FIVE DAYS A WEEK

In compliance with the governor’s order, the White Mountains Regional School District is preparing to open its schools full time.

Last week, Gov. Chris Sununu ordered all New Hampshire schools to resume in-person learning five days a week by April 19.

SAU 36, which has used a two-day hybrid learning schedule since September, has leapt into action. Various district committees (communications, facilities, health, instruction, transportation, technology, social emotional learning, and food service) will meet over the next week-and-a-half to develop a comprehensive plan.

Committees will report out recommendations to SAU 36 administration.

Meanwhile teachers will be given a planning day on Wednesday, April 14, to prepare their classrooms for full-time learning.

More details will be announced as plans develop, according to SAU 36 officials.

NEW MEETING SCHEDULE

The SAU 36 School Board will no longer meet on Mondays.

Moving forward, they will meet on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, in order to avoid scheduling conflicts with municipal board meetings (Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, etc.).

Fear

Continued from Page 3

is also deeply concerned for the safety of North Country citizens from “the massive increase of traffic this landfill would cause on Routes 3 and 116.”

“Many people who live in towns north of Whitefield work daily in Littleton,” said Boswell. “They drive to work on Route 116. The thought of as many as 300 tractor-trailer trucks filled with out-of-state trash traveling down Route 3 and trying to turn the corner in downtown Whitefield to access Route 116 is as frightening as it is dangerous.”

She said, “As citizens, I know you know that not only would this be dangerous in terms of traffic, but also local folks, children, walking to the dairy bar and the Jiffy Mart. When I think about tourists trying to come into town to go to the Weathervane, the Mountain View Grand or stop at those businesses it is not a pretty picture. Short and sweet, it would be another nail in the coffin for this little town.”

According to the minutes of a Jan. 29, 2020 meeting between the DOT and Casella representatives, Casella engineer John Gay confirmed that daily truck traffic would consist of an estimated 100 67-foot-long WB-67 tractor-trailer trucks per day, excluding local contractor trucks, smaller vehicles and passenger.

At that meeting, DOT District 1 officials, based in Lancaster, expressed concerns about increased truck traffic along Route 116, a stretch of road between Littleton and Whitfield that has had recent fatal accidents, and concerns about the hill on Route 116 in Whitefield leaving Route 3.

Although Gay specifically estimated in the January 2020 DOT meeting minutes that there would be 100 67-foot-long trucks per day, Casella representatives, in a response on Friday, said, “Those who may be concerned by seeing 100 trucks per day from the January 2020 filing are likely assuming the false narrative created that those 100 trucks will be long haul transfer tractor-trailers. This is not the case. Those 100 trucks include local small haulers, local residents making personal trips, and anyone else coming across the scales at the landfill. Given the number of trucks traveling

this route currently, our permit application does not represent what any reasonable person might consider a significant increase.”

In Casella’s own traffic study, submitted to DOT in September 2020, the company states, “The proposed landfill operation is expected to average about 102 truck trips per day (20% above the Bethlehem fill rates), of which 50 trucks would be larger vehicles such as 18 wheeler semi-tractor trailers (FHWA WB-67 type).”

Casella representatives were asked Friday if or how they will be responding to those school officials and residents concerned about truck traffic, if anyone from the company will be meeting with residents and local officials to address concerns, and how Casella will be addressing DOT concerns about added traffic and safety if the landfill is ultimately approved.

“Through the normal course of permitting a facility such as the Granite State Landfill we are required to file, discuss, and re-file a large number of permit applications,” said Casella spokesman Jeff Weld. “Any concerns brought up in initial meetings with regulatory agencies are required to be addressed in subsequent filings and is normal

course of business. Safety is our top priority regardless of the route taken, and transportation is one of the most highly regulated parts of the industry. Whether it is a school or private residence makes no difference to a driver, safety is always at the top of their list. It’s unfortunate that those who are in opposition of this project continue to use fear tactics like invoking schools to stir emotional responses.”

Casella representatives have requested several times that the selectboard in Dalton engage with them on the host community agreement proposal, which includes more than \$71 million in direct financial and other benefits to the town, said Weld.

“This is the most appropriate way for citizens who may have concerns to engage in the state permitting process and unfortunately the selectboard has chosen not to engage to this point,” he said.

After consulting with town counsel, Dalton selectmen said they declined to engage with Casella on the host community agreement proposal because the proposed landfill has not yet been approved and its fate is uncertain and any engagement would cost the town in legal fees.

Waiver

Continued from Page 2

stand on this issue,” he said.

School Board Chairman Greg Cook made the motion to allow Hart to pursue the waiver for the week prior to April vacation, to allow school staff to complete their vaccination period, and then resume the five-day school week model be-

ginning Monday, May 3.

“This is something I will not be voting for,” said Matt St. John, the newest member of the school board who last week voiced support for resuming five-day school weeks as quickly as possible. “The district has been more restrictive than the situation has warranted ... My understanding of the governor’s order is we do have a reprieve if we get to the 19th, and because of quarantines, because of cases, because of what-

ever the situation, we can for up to 48 hours be fully remote or partially remote ...”

The governor’s order is written in such a way that it gives the school district, and ultimately the superintendent, flexibility if the situation looks scary on April 19, 20 or 21 to make a temporary transition to remote, and it gives the district “the security blanket we need to get through April,” he said.

Cook said the waiver is not a guarantee and

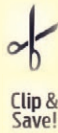
could be denied at the state level.

In a split vote identical to last week, Cook and school board members Ann Wiggett and Larry Blaisdell and voted to take Hart’s recommendation to pursue the waiver for the week before April vacation and resume five-day weeks beginning May 3.

St. John and school board member Erica Antonucci voted against Hart’s recommendation, making for a 3-2 vote in favor.

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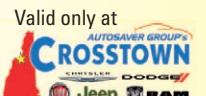


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