



The Littleton Weekly Record

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 26, 2025

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White Mountain Canning Founder
Named Business Leader Of The Year. Page 2

White Mountain Canning Founder Named Business Leader Of Year

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — For building up what has become an anchor business on Main Street, making downtown more vibrant, and giving back to the community to make it stronger, Dan DeMoras, founder of White Mountain Canning Co., was named the 2025 Raymond S. Burton Business Leader of the Year.

“Having received this award myself, I can tell you it really feels good to get this award from your peers,” David Harkless, owner of Littleton Bike and Fitness and a past business leader of the year, said Monday during the 33rd annual Littleton Area Chamber Commerce economic development summit at the Elks Lodge.

In 2004, when he took over the bike shop that had been owned by Barry Field, Harkless said he felt like he had a huge pair of shoes to fill.

“Barry Field was very involved in our Main Street and our community,” said Harkless. “I made those attributes a large part of my business plan. I enjoy helping to make Littleton a fun place to work and live. In turn, this community supports me and my business, plus I get to live in an awesome town. I have a deep appreciation for our business community, and I have the utmost respect for small business owners who are, as I say, ‘playing with their own dime.’”

Unique on Main Street, DeMoras’ family-owned business that was founded in 2013 specializes in high-quality canned pickles, sauces, mustards, vegetables, jams, jellies, olive oils, and more.

“Ten years ago, if you came up to me and said you wanted to quit your job and open a store that sold pickles and jams, I don’t think I would have said, ‘Hey, that’s a great idea,’” said Harkless. “But this year’s winner gets it. He understands the keys to running a successful business — lots of hard work, foresight, passion, the ability to adapt, and the vision to see opportunities.”

DeMoras has them all, he said.

“He is even more involved in Littleton,” said Harkless. “He believes tourism is a key to the success of our downtown. Most mornings,



Dan DeMoras, left, founder of White Mountain Canning Co. in Littleton, was named the 2025 Raymond S. Burton Business Leader of the Year, an award that was presented by Dave Harkless, right, owner of Littleton Bike and Fitness and a past business leader of the year. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

you’ll spot him on the sidewalk keeping it tidy for our guests.”

DeMoras works with Veronica Francis, founder of Notch Net and promoter of Pollyanna of Littleton, to coordinate bus tours to Littleton throughout the year, he said.

“He hires interns from the CTC culinary program and insists that his young workers put school first,” said Harkless. “And he supports many events with his time and money, like the positive behavior program with the Littleton Police Department, First Fridays, the gathering of the jack o’ lanterns, golf tournaments, numerous

fundraisers, and much more. He has taken key retail spaces on Main Street that were underutilized and created a cornerstone of downtown Littleton. His hard work has raised the tide for all the boats around him. I pity the person who at some time will have to fill his shoes because they are a size 15.”

As he stepped toward the podium and accepted the business leader award, DeMoras received a standing ovation.

He settled in Littleton because it is the hometown of his wife, Jen.

“We’ve always loved this town,” said DeMo-

ras.

He described the origins of his business, which he began by selling a dozen recipes from his grandmother at area farmers markets.

The enterprise expanded — and faced expansion challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic — and today includes more than 300 recipes and partnerships with local chefs and eateries.

DeMoras thanked the community for its support and said he’s living the dream.

Part of the job, he said, is working with local farmers and creating an environment where education can thrive.

Littleton Presents Case For \$2.5 Million In Emergency Sewer Plant Upgrades

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — As a special deliberative session nears on Dec. 1 and a special town vote on Dec. 29, municipal officials presented their case for a requested \$2.5 million in emergency funding for sewer plant replacement parts and repairs.

During a bond and budget hearing Friday at the Littleton fire station, Joseph Ducharme, the senior vice-president and division manager of Hoyle Tanner, a municipal engineering enlisted by the town several years ago, outlined the equipment failures at the wastewater treatment facility since 2022.

The failures include clarifiers, centrifuges, and mechanical aerators and follow decades of deferred maintenance, which town officials several years ago began working to address through short- and long-term strategic plans.

The emergency funds are needed just to keep the plant operational, and additional grants will be coming down the road for future phases, said Ducharme, according to the meeting minutes.

Larger plant capacity is expected to be covered as the town grows, he said.

As for who will pay the cost of financing the emergency funding, Littleton town manager Troy Brown said sewer users would be paying, though it will need to be calculated.

Selectman Roger Emerson said the facility is on the verge of collapse and the town doesn’t have any time left.

According to Ducharme’s presentation, the Littleton plant, which serves 1,500 customers and has been in its current configuration since 1988, is designed to treat 1.5 million gallons daily, and 5.2 million gallons during peak flow.

A new federal discharge permit was issued in August 2020.

Two months later, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services made a site visit and issued a notice of deficiencies that require corrective action, which the town has since been

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ON THE COVER

An exam table is moved onto a trailer on the final day of operation at Ammonoosuc Community Health Services as the clinic closes for good, Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025, in Franconia, N.H. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)



NEWS BRIEFS

38th Annual Littleton Christmas Parade Set For Nov. 28

The 38th annual Littleton Christmas Parade is set for noon on Friday.

This year's grand marshals will be Glenn and Diane Stewart who, until three years ago, were loyal and devoted volunteers for the parade.

The theme of this year's parade is "All I want for Christmas is . . ."

The parade route will begin behind the Littleton fire station and follow West Main Street to Main Street to Union Street and conclude at Lakeway Elementary School.

Currently, there are 14 floats, two bands, plus numerous marching groups and decorated vehicles.

There are three divisions and each one will be led by law enforcement cruisers, the Littleton Police Department, New Hampshire State Police, and the Department of Corrections in Berlin.

The bands include the Summertime Marching Band and the Baker Valley Band.

Special guests include Xanthi Russell, Miss New

Hampshire 2025; the "Roaming Railroad," from Suffield, Conn.; and, of course, the star of the show, Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Santa will be at the historical museum located at the bottom level of the Littleton Opera House after the parade to visit with children. Miss New Hampshire will also be there.

This traditional event marking the start of the Christmas season and the arrival of Santa will be held rain, snow, or shine.

Fire Training Draws Complaints Due To Drifting Debris

LANCASTER — A fire department training exercise drew some complaints on Sunday, Nov. 16, after smoke and debris from a live burn drifted into nearby neighborhoods.

At the Nov. 17 Select Board meeting, Lancaster Fire Chief Randy Flynn said several residents voiced concerns about conditions during the Sunday training burn. He said shifting winds

contributed to the smoke issues and agreed future burns should receive additional review to reduce impacts on neighbors.

See full story at www.CaledonianRecord.com

State Still Seeks \$30K Restitution From Dalton Contractor

After half a decade, the New Hampshire attorney general's office still seeks \$29,500 in restitution from a Dalton contractor, who earlier this year claimed he is broke, unemployed, and can't make the monthly payments he previously agreed to.

A review hearing is scheduled for Dec. 1 for Jaime Deforge, 46, who ran Twin State Mobile Home Repair and Remodeling before he was charged with taking pre-payments from customers and not completing agreed-upon work or buying materials for jobs.

See full story at www.CaledonianRecord.com

Federal Drug Offender On Release Re-Arrested After More Violations

A repeat offender from Colebrook who had been nearing his sentencing at federal court for his role in a Massachusetts-based enterprise that trafficked fentanyl into New Hampshire is back behind bars for alleged drug and theft violations

while on release.

In October 2024, Brexton Boudle, 42, whose past state charges include breaking into the Colebrook Veterinary Clinic to steal drugs as well as assaulting a fellow jail inmate in a race-motivated attack, was one of 14 people in Massachusetts and New Hampshire arrested by federal agents.

See full story at www.CaledonianRecord.com

Franconia Sets Tax Rate, Looks At Future Spending

FRANCONIA — With the town's new property tax rate set at \$15.94 per \$1,000 of valuation — a 4-cent decrease from last year — Franconia officials are reviewing both immediate staffing needs and long-term capital spending as they plan for 2026.

Town Administrator Libby Staples told the Select Board at its Nov. 10 meeting that Road Agent Jeremy Hall has proposed adding a fourth full-time highway employee. She said project completion improved this year after the department brought on a part-time worker for the summer and fall.

Staples also broke down the new tax rate releaseAs officials assess the tax implications, the Capital Improvements Committee has submitted its 2026–2030 Capital Improvement Plan, outlining recommended capital reserve and trust fund contributions as equipment costs rise and wait times

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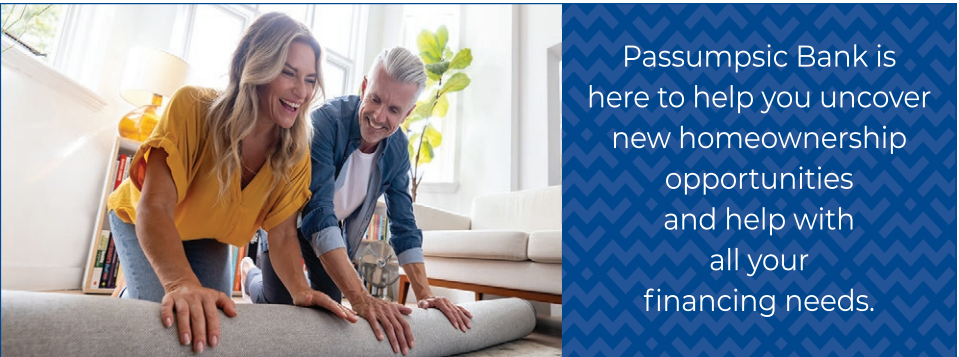
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OBITUARIES

LOUISE A. CLICHE HARRIGAN

On Nov. 16, 2025, surrounded by her loving family, Heaven welcomed another angel, Louise A. Cliche Harrigan. Born on June 6, 1933, Louise was one of the kindest souls, and certainly the best mother a family could ever have. Family was everything to Louise, and nothing brought her more joy than spending time with her children and grandchildren.

Louise was an accomplished, multi-medium artist who loved arts and crafts and created numerous oil paintings, watercolors, and pastel masterpieces throughout her life. She displayed artwork at craft shows and fairs, earning many first-place awards. Private orders for her paintings poured in from family, friends, and townspeople, and she was all too happy to oblige. Louise also donated many pieces of her artwork to worthy causes and local charities.

Louise was a devout Catholic, and her faith in God was the cornerstone of her life.

She was an active member of the Catholic Daughters of America for many years, as well as the Emblem Club.

She had a passion for the outdoors—camping, nature, horses, and cross-country skiing. After a fresh snowfall, she often ventured into the woods for hours. The wintry scenes and wildlife she encountered frequently became the subjects of her next artistic creations. Louise enjoyed feeding the crows that frequented her backyard. She once saw a large group of cardinals gathered in a tree outside a nearby window—an experience that may have inspired one of her most popular oil paintings.

In more recent years, Louise enjoyed



spending time with family and friends. She was a storyteller who loved to reminisce about her childhood in Whitefield, NH, during the Great Depression. She also loved cruising the back roads of Littleton, Whitefield, and the surrounding areas. During those drives, she would recall stories and events from her youth. Those lucky enough to join her were treated to a firsthand glimpse of life in earlier times—and often an ice cream cone afterward. Louise had a rare gift for storytelling, drawing listeners in so deeply that they felt as though they had lived the moments alongside her.

Heaven has received a one-of-a-kind soul who will be sorely missed. Those who knew

and loved Louise can take comfort in the thought that we will one day see her again.

Louise was predeceased by her husband, Roy Edward Harrigan; and her sisters, Stella Cliche Rihm and Bertha Cliche Mason. She is survived by her sister, Claudette Cliche Fearon; her daughters, Anne Harrigan Paine and her husband, Paul; Kay Harrigan Faulkner; Elaine Harrigan Ross; Janice Harrigan Newton and her husband, Richard; her son, Edward Roy Harrigan and his wife, Kathleen; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

A Catholic Mass will be held at St. Rose of Lima Church in Littleton on Dec. 5, 2025, at 10 a.m.

Louise will be laid to rest at St. Matthews Cemetery in Whitefield in the spring of 2026.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

BRIAN DAVID POTTEIGER

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Brian David Potteiger, 53, of Lunenburg, Vermont, on Nov. 18, 2025. His guidance and humor will never be forgotten.

Brian was born on May 3, 1972, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Robert Potteiger Sr. and Nora (Potteiger) Snyder. He was raised in Middletown, where he built lifelong friendships and graduated from Lower Dauphin High School. Brian had an incredible ability to make anyone feel like a friend, whether he met them minutes or years ago.

Brian was a gifted jack-of-all-trades: plumbing, electrical, welding, and any project that came his way, he approached them all with skill and the willingness to help. His talent for hands-on work made him the person everyone called when something needed fixing. From a young age, Brian was dedicated to serving his community. He spent many years with the Londonderry Fire Company before moving to Vermont in 1998, where he joined the Lunenburg Volunteer Fire Department. Alongside his fire service, he built a long and respected career in manufacturing and was admired for his dedication, skill, and integrity. Brian worked at Hitchiner Manufacturing from 1998-2020, holding roles ranging from CNC machinist to supervisor. Most recently, he worked as a CNC machinist at Burndy in Littleton, N.H., for the past two years, where he was known for his expertise, reliability, and humor.

Outside of work, Brian found his greatest joy in being a father and making people



laugh. He loved hunting, fishing, telling stories, joking around, and sharing memories with family and friends. No matter what he was doing, he embraced life with sincerity, heart, and laughter. He was always willing to teach anyone who wanted to learn and was the first to step up when someone needed help. He will be remembered for his generous heart, clever solutions, and the laughter he brought into the lives of everyone who

knew him.

Left to cherish his memory are his mother, Nora (Potteiger) Snyder; his daughter, Kristen Potteiger, and her mother, Michelle Balch-Potteiger. Brian also held a special place in his heart for his niece, Karley Balch, and nephew, Kaden Balch, whom he helped raise and loved as his own children. He is also survived by his brother, Robert Potteiger Jr. (Maria); his niece Rachel Potteiger; his nephews Benjamin Potteiger, and Elijah Potteiger; and a large extended family of aunts, uncles, cousins, and countless friends. Brian is preceded in death by his father Robert Potteiger Sr., and stepfather, Nevlin Snyder.

At this time, no services are planned. In the months ahead, his family will bring loved ones together for celebrations of life in both Vermont and Pennsylvania. These gatherings will be relaxed, heartfelt moments where we can share stories, laugh, cry, and honor the incredible man he was. If you have any photos of Brian throughout the years, we would be honored if you shared them by emailing them to kpotteiger72@gmail.com. These memories will help keep his spirit and stories alive.



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OBITUARIES

EDDY LEE MOORE

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of Eddy Lee Moore who was born on Oct. 11, 1939, in Hanover, N.H. and passed away peacefully on Nov. 13, 2025, at home surrounded by his family.

Eddy was the only child born to Lulu Edna Eastburn and Ernest Alton Moore of Strafford, Vt. He grew up in Strafford and came to Littleton at 12 years old when his step-father, Clarence Milan Durant, was employed to help build the Moore Dam.

He graduated from Littleton High School with the Class of 1957. As a child, he was given the gift of an Erector Set which began his interests in putting things together and enhanced his skills in Electronics. While still in high school, Eddy started working for Fred Tabbut of Tabbut's TV as an apprentice during after school hours and eventually bought into the company forming a partnership which lasted over 25+ years. He also served as a member and officer of the NH Electronic Technicians Association.

He served six years in the New Hampshire National Guards and was married twice. First, to Beverly Parent of Lisbon, NH and secondly, for 30 years to Dawn Schoff of Landaff, N.H. Together, they started and operated a gift shop, The Heritage Barn, for six years and closed it to relocate Tabbut's TV to that location.

Eddy is best known for his role in supporting his service to the Town of Littleton. He was a strong, conservative Republican and be-



lieved himself to be the "Town Watchdog" for the taxpayer. His service to the Town of Littleton included: Three years as a Selectman; many years as Chairman of the Profile Cable TV Consortium; Fifteen years as a Commissioner for the Littleton Water & Light Department; 34 years as Chairman of the Littleton Zoning Board of Adjustment; and served many, many years on the Littleton Budget Committee.

Eddy is survived by his son, Dana and wife (Kerry) of Laconia, N.H.; daughters: Michelle Bernier of East Wakefield and Landaff, N.H.; Kathryn Moore of Littleton, N.H.; Deborah Ann Farley and husband (Michael) of Bethlehem, N.H.; four grandsons: Hunter, Austin, Keagan and Patrick, and three great-grandchildren.

Eddy had a tight circle of friends, including Lloyd & Anita Cate of Warren, N.H.; Frank Porfido, Jr; Art Tighe; and Jere Eames of Littleton, N.H., and at parties Eddy was known for his antics, fun and laughter.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at the Littleton Elks Lodge on Jan. 17, 2026, at 11 a.m.

If desired, donations may be made in his memory to: Littleton Fire Rescue, 230 W Main St., Littleton, NH 03561; or to North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency, 536 Cottage St, Littleton, NH 03561. Condolences and messages may be made online at Phaneuf Funeral Home.

WILLIAM BROWN ROBIE

William Brown Robie of East Barre, Vermont, passed away on Nov. 6, 2025. Bill was born in Littleton, N.H. on Feb. 17, 1943. He was the eldest son of Bernard and Mildred (Brown) Robie and is survived by his brother Richard Robie and Sharon of Bethlehem, N.H. and his sister Linda Boulay and Michael of Littleton, N.H. Bill leaves behind his wife on 41 years, Janet Robie and his children Jeffrey Robie of Barre, Michael Robie of Williamstown and Tracy LaPan and Freddie of Barre, as well as his stepchildren Mark Roy of Waterbury, Vermont; Michael Roy of Mansfield, Texas; Shannon Hartnett of Andover, Massachusetts and Shauna Wolf of Barre. Bill is also survived by 15 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and nieces and nephews.

Bill graduated with the class of 1961 from Bethlehem High School (NH) and in 1964 from Pierce Business College (NH). He started his long career in the insurance industry at Manufacturers and Merchants Insurance Company in Concord, N.H. In 1966, he moved to Barre, Vermont and joined Union Mutual Fire Insurance Company in Montpelier and was promoted to Treasurer in 1980. He retired after 40 years of service. Bill was President of the Mutual Accountants Association of New England,



President of Vermont Fieldman's Association, Assistant Treasurer of the Green Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America and President of the Montpelier Rotary Club. Bill was a devoted member of the Knights of Columbus, serving as Faithful Navigator of Assembly #115, Grand Knight of Council #399 and District Deputy for the State of Vermont. He was also a eucharistic minister and parish council member for Mother Cabrini parish.

Bill was an athlete and avid sports fan. He was a longtime member of the Barre Men's Softball and Basketball leagues. He loved the Red Sox and Celtics and was a season ticket holder at Thunder Road. He enjoyed traveling and camping.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to St. Monica School in Barre, Vt.

A Mass of Christian Burial to celebrate Bill's life was held on Friday, Nov. 14, 2025 at the St. Monica Catholic Church in Barre. Burial followed at St. Sylvester's Cemetery in Lower Websterville.

Arrangement were made in the care of Pruneau-Polli Funeral Home in Barre. Those wishing to express online condolences may do so at: www.pruneaupollifuneralhome.com

Bethlehem Cuts Tax Rate, Awarded \$750K For Transfer Station

After the Bethlehem Select Board voted against the idea on Oct. 20, a Casella Waste Systems supporter continues to push the board to open up landfill expansion talks with Casella, prompting one resident to dub it "groundhog day."

The Trudeau Road landfill is expected to close after 2026 — or earlier if the state determines it has already reached capacity or is nearing it — and the town will have to build its own transfer station and staff it, which will come with costs, though no one yet knows exactly how much.

On Monday, Richard Ubaldo a former selectman and Casella advocate, spoke before the board and asked several questions he read from his phone in regard to the transfer station and hard cost numbers.

The station — which the town previously estimated at about \$1 million to build and which in the last few days was awarded \$750,000 in federal funding — will go to a discussion with updates during the select board's next meeting on Dec. 1, said Nancy Strand, chair of the board.

"Plans from a few years ago are now in revision and part of that revision is to reduce the cost," she said. "The footprint will be a little smaller."

Ubaldo asked about costs for employees, insur-

ance, and operations. Town officials said all station expenses will begin in 2027 and it will be more appropriate to discuss them in 2026 when numbers become known.

"It's my understanding that both school budgets are going up," said Ubaldo. "I know ... this is not your purview, but it is your purview when it comes to creating taxes."

"The school transmitted 42 cents less for this tax rate setting," said town administrator Mary Moritz.

"Can I just finish?" Ubaldo said in the middle of Moritz's comment. "I know, but I'm just saying that the school budgets are going to be going up so they're going to have an effect on our taxes, and even though you guys are not responsible for the school budgets and what it comes to, it does reflect on our taxes."

"Groundhog day, again," said resident Richard Southwell. "I really get a little bit huffy when we start going to the Select Board about what's happening with the school budget, and I think you guys have been incredibly polite on that. But at the end of the day, your portfolio, your job description, what you were put in those seats to do, is to run this town and the town's finances, not the schools."

See full story at www.CaledonianRecord.com

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News Briefs

Continued from Page 4

for trucks and heavy machinery stretch up to four years. The seven-member committee began its review in May, meeting with department heads and updating planning spreadsheets.

For 2026, the committee recommends \$532,285 in total capital funding, a 7.7% increase over this year. The recommendations include \$13,992 for the Transfer Station equipment fund; \$29,000 for the Police Department's capital reserve; \$118,492 for highway trucks and \$48,323 for heavy equipment; and \$40,000 for bridge construction, along with \$96,000 combined for sidewalks and highway improvements.

The plan also calls for contributions to building and grounds reserves, fire and EMS equipment funds, recreation accounts and several smaller departments, including the library, Heritage Museum

and Frost Place, reflecting increased costs tied to aging facilities.

Proposed 2026 purchases include replacing a Ford F-350 for the Highway Department for \$75,000 and buying a UTV and trailer for \$43,000 for EMS Fire. Two painting projects will move forward using American Rescue Plan Act funding, and separate state funds are expected to support culvert replacements.

The committee also recommended placing proceeds from recent equipment sales — \$49,500 from the Fire Department's sale of its old Rescue 2 truck and \$6,804 from the Transfer Station's sale of old containers — into their respective capital funds.

WMRSD To Cut Two Positions As Part Of Middle School Consolidation

WHITEFIELD — The White Mountains Regional School Dis-

trict will eliminate two full-time equivalent positions in the central office as part of its middle school consolidation plan.

Assistant Superintendent Rob Scott told the School Board on Nov. 6 that duties from the cut positions will shift to assistant principals at Lancaster and Whitefield elementary schools.

Scott said the change will improve data reporting required for state and federal funding. Under the current system, central office staff can misinterpret data provided by the elementary schools, leading to time-consuming corrections.

"It's hours upon hours trying to fix it. So, let's put the data back into the schools where they know it," Scott said, noting that reporting errors can affect federal funding. "This data needs to be important, where every penny counts."

Scott also updated the board on plans to move grades 7 and 8 to the high school starting in the 2026-27 school year. Middle school students will be housed at the north end of the building and will use a separate entrance. Plans call for seven homerooms, and staffing decisions are still being made.

He said the district intends to maintain as much separation as possible between middle and high school students, in line with community feedback. During visits to similar schools, including Hopkinton, Scott said officials saw models with more student mixing, but WMRSD will not pursue that approach because of local concerns.

"To start this off, we've got to hold true to using the north end for the middle school and keeping them there," he said. "And then see how things go and have discussions with our stakeholders and families and see if we could do it differently [in the future]."

Meanwhile, the district is drafting policies to support the grade 7-8 transition and reviewing enrollment as part of ongoing programming discussions.

Scott said the administrative structure has been set: the high school will return to having one principal, with two assistant principals — one for grades 7-8 and one for grades 9-12 — along with a Career and Technical Education director. Each assistant principal and the CTE director will oversee discipline for two grade levels. The high school assistant principal will also serve as athletic director.

While the school will be renamed White Mountains Regional Middle High School, data and finance reporting will continue under the current K-8 elementary and 9-12 high school model. Scott said switching to a reporting system that separates elementary and middle schools would require costly staff recertification.

"It's crazy that the state does it that way, because it's the same person and it's just how we classify it. But we have to abide by the rules of certification," he said.

Background

In June, the School Board unanimously approved the plan to move grades 7 and 8 from Lancaster and Whitefield elementary schools to the high school. The high school enrolls about 321 students in a building designed for about 600, and enrollment is projected to decline by 18 percent by 2026.

Superintendent Marian Anastasia has said declining enrollment threatens the district's ability to maintain a full range of academic programs. Moving middle school students to the high school, she said, would help preserve offerings, expand enrichment opportunities and improve long-term outcomes.

To assist with the transition, the district has hired the New England School Development Council.

While several board members said a standalone middle school would be preferable, they agreed it is not financially feasible, particularly after repeated voter rejections of district budgets. Other consolidation options were ruled out because they would require long bus rides between towns.

District officials have said the move is driven by academic priorities rather than cost savings, though financial impacts will be included in the fiscal 2027 budget. Over the next year, administrators plan to redesign the middle school program, realign staffing, assess facility needs and adjust transportation and extracurricular offerings.

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Health Center Closure Reveals Toll Of Federal Cuts On Rural Communities

BY MICHAEL CASEY, AMANDA SWINHART
AND DEVI SHASTRI
Associated Press

FRANCONIA, N.H. — For more than two decades, Susan Bushby, a 70-year-old housekeeper from a rural ski town in New Hampshire’s White Mountains, took comfort in knowing she only had a short drive to reach the community health center.

The lodge-like medical building, which sits on a hill overlooking town, was like a second home for Bushby and many other patients. The front desk staff knew their names and never missed a chance to celebrate a birthday or anniversary. Staff photos of the wilderness that makes the place such a draw hung on the walls, and bumping into a neighbor in the waiting room was routine.

But last month, the Ammonoosuc Community Health Services location in Franconia, a town of around 1,000 people, closed for good.

Closure raises concerns
Officials blamed cuts in Medicaid, the federal program that millions of low-income Americans rely on for health care. The 1,400 patients, almost half of them older and some facing serious health challenges like cancer and early-stage dementia, must now drive at least 10 miles (16 kilometers) along rural roads to reach the nearest health center, which also is near a regional hospital. A second center is twice as far.

“I was very disturbed. I was downright angry,” said Bushby, who was brought to tears as she discussed the challenges of starting over at a new health center. “I just really like it there. I don’t know, I’m just really going to miss it. It’s really hard for me to explain, but it’s going to be sad.”

The closure of the Franconia center reflects the financial struggles facing community health centers and rural health care systems more broadly amid Medicaid cuts and a feared spike in health insurance rates. The government shutdown, which ended last week, was driven by a Democratic demand to extend tax credits, which ensure low- and middle-income people can afford health insurance through the Affordable Care Act, or ACA.

Patients rattled by closure
Marsha Luce, whose family moved from the Washington, D.C., area in 2000, is especially concerned about the impact on her 72-year-old husband, a former volunteer firefighter who has had his left ear and part of his jaw removed due to cancer. He also has heart and memory issues.

She worries about longer waits to see his doctor and the loss of relationships built up over decades in Franconia.

“It’s going to be hard,” she said. “But it’s a relationship that’s going to be missed. It’s a relationship that you can talk to people and you tell them something and you go, yeah, well, I’ve had cancer. Oh, let’s see. Oh, yeah. There it is in your chart. Do you know what I mean?”

Demise of rural health care
More than 100 hospitals closed over the past decade, according to the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, a policy and advocacy group, and more than 700 more hospitals are at risk of closure. A branch of the HealthFirst Family Care Center, a facility in Canaan, New Hampshire, also announced it was closing at the end of October due in part to “changes in Medicaid reimbursement and federal funding” for these facilities.

“Because of these Medicaid cuts, we’re going to see rural hospitals, in particular, hit hard,” New Hampshire Sen. Maggie Hassan, a Democrat, told The Associated Press. “And obviously, the failure to extend the ACA tax credits right now is going to compound the problem. ... These providers are going to see more and more uninsured patients. And that means they’re going to have to make really difficult decisions.”

The sustainability of the centers is critical because they serve as the nation’s primary care safety net, treating patients regard-

less of insurance coverage or ability to pay.
Though federally-funded community health centers like the one in Franconia have expanded their reach in recent years, treating 1 in 10 Americans and 1 in 5 rural Americans, they’ve often done so in the face of major financial constraints, according to data from the National Association of Community Health Centers.
On average, the centers are losing money — relying heavily on cash reserves, making service changes and sometimes closing locations to stay afloat, NACHC found. Nearly half have less than 90 days’ cash on hand, according to the association. The future is even more bleak, with at least 2 million community health center patients expected to lose Medicaid coverage by 2034 and

2 million more who are newly uninsured turning to the centers for care.
“There’s nothing left to trim without cutting into care itself,” said Peter Shin, the chief science officer at the association.
Tough choices for Ammonoosuc
When President Donald Trump’s bill passed this summer, Ed Shanshala, the CEO of Ammonoosuc, knew he was in trouble.
A meticulous planner and strategist, Shanshala projected that his network of five New Hampshire health centers — which relies on more than \$2 million in federal funding out of a \$12 million budget — would face a \$500,000 shortfall partly due to Medicaid

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Dr. Melissa Buddensee, left, meets with patient Susan Bushby at Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2025, in Franconia, N.H., in the final days before the clinic closes for good. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

ACHS

Continued from Page 9

funding cuts. He also expected work requirements in the bill and spikes in health insurance premiums to have an impact.

Shanshala knew he needed to make cuts to save his centers and zeroed in on Franconia because the building was leased, whereas Ammonoosuc owns the other facilities.

“We’re really left with no choice,” Shanshala said, adding the closure would save \$250,000. Finding additional cuts is hard, given that the centers provide services to anyone under 200% of the federal poverty line, he said. If he cuts additional services, Shanshala fears some patients will end up in a hospital emergency room or “stop engaging in health care period.”

“To have to pull out of a community is devastating on a relational level,” he said. “People still have access to health care. We’ll help them with transportation, but it’s clearly a grieving process. Whenever a business leaves a community, regardless if it’s health care or something else, there’s an emotional fabric tear.”

Sense of loss

The closure has brought little controversy. Just a lot of grief.

Most of the patients come from the small towns of Franconia, Easton, Lincoln and Sugar Hill, communities whose economies rely on hikers, skiers and leaf peepers. Many are older, sicker and more spread out than the rest of the state.

Luce, who volunteers at the local Head Start program and delivers food to schools in Franconia, said the closure has her mostly frustrated with politicians, adding that she wished lawmakers in Washington could “just live the way regular people live” for

a few months.

“They would have a much different idea of what goes on in the real world,” she added.

More closures coming?

Patients like Jill Brewer, the chair of the Franconia Board of Selectmen whose family has been going there for decades, worry about the future and whether the closure signals the gradual collapse of the health care system in this part of the state.

“Is this kind of the first domino to fall?” said Brewer, noting how disbanding the town’s volunteer ambulance service in 2023 angered many residents.

“It definitely leaves you feeling pretty anxious that this is going to continue to kind of snowball and become an even bigger issue,” she added.

On the clinic’s last day, it was business as usual — no balloons, no cakes, no farewell speeches. The staff were stoic as they tended to patients, three of whom came in for their physicals and four for checkups. Bushby, who had come to have her blood pressure checked, hugged a staffer as crews dismantled the clinic and wheeled out exam tables.

“I’ll come see you, honey. I will,” Bushby said, hugging Diane LaDuke, a patient access specialist. “It’s been such a joy coming here.”

Sewer Plant

Continued from Page 2

completing.

In 2021, Littleton hired a consultant to develop an asset management program.

In 2022, the town secured funding for facility improvements.

In 2023, Hoyle Tanner was put under contract to prepare a facility plan and design.

In April 2025, the facility plan was submitted to NHDES.

But after several emergency expenditures for failing equipment in the past few years, recent failures in the summer and early fall of 2025 led to the emergency funding request to address failed sludge de-watering equipment. Also needed are new mechanical aerators and a new headworks.

The emergency funds are needed for repairs to the secondary process to sustain plant operations and maintain permit compliance.

Today, most plant equipment is either obsolete or beyond its useful life, many plant elements are hydraulically undersized, and increased biological treatment capacity is needed.

The special deliberative session is scheduled for 6 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Littleton High School cafeteria. The snow date is Dec. 2.

The special town meeting ballot vote is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dec. 29 at the highway garage on West Main Street.

According to the warrant article, \$2.5 million in bonds are sought, though the Select Board can offset costs and apply for federal, state or other aid, including a low-interest loan from the state’s clean water revolving fund, as well as state and federal grants through such possible sources as the Northern Border Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, and a 20-percent grant from NHDES.

To pass, the article, which is recommended 5-0 by the Select Board, needs a 60-percent super-majority vote.

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