



The Littleton Weekly Record

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025

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LOCAL

New Town Hall, Housing Initiative Presented At Economic Luncheon

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The latest updates on the town-wide revaluation, new town hall, industrial park, and a housing initiative were presented during the 33rd annual Littleton Area Economic Development summit at the Elks Lodge on Monday.

One of the first tasks town manager Troy Brown had after coming on board as manager in 2024 was overseeing the revaluation of assessed values in Littleton.

“This was a major undertaking, and while the increases in values were substantial, the end result is a more accurate and equitable assessment of our tax base,” said Brown. “This new valuation better reflects the strength of our real estate market and positions Littleton competitively for future investments.”

The total valuation of the town increased by 53 percent, from \$872 million to \$1.3 billion, he said.

It resulted in a tax rate reduction of about 43 percent, dropping the rate by \$10.84, from a 2024 rate of \$24.94 to a 2025 rate of \$14.10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, said Brown.

“Moving forward, our goal is to closely monitor property values and maintain values close to fair market as possible,” he said. “As many of you are aware, in 2024 the town’s property values were assessed at approximately 51 percent of market value.”

As a response, the Select Board adopted a policy in the summer to ensure that Littleton’s collective values don’t drop below 87 percent of fair market value ever again, he said.

As for the town offices, for two decades they have been located in leased space on the third floor of the Bank of New



During the Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce's 33rd annual economic development luncheon on Monday, Littleton town manager Troy Brown spoke of the 2025 town-wide revaluation outcome and a new building bought last week that will be the future and long-term home of the municipal offices. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

Hampshire.

In March, voters authorized \$700,000 for the purchase and renovations of the building and property at 50 Pleasant St., which had been owned by Consolidated Communications.

Of the total amount, \$625,000

was used to buy the building and \$75,000 will go toward immediate minor renovations.

Last week, the town was able to close on the purchase so the building can serve as the long-term location of the future town offices, said Brown.

“This is an important step toward securing a modern, accessible, efficient space for our staff and residents and it will be a major investment into the core of downtown,” he said.

For others projects, the new Cottage Street sidewalks are expected to be complete in 2026 and the riverfront commons development will also begin next year.

Half a century ago, the Littleton Industrial Park was launched, an effort that then and now has only existed through partnerships with the town and state and those at the federal level, said Chad Stearns, president of the board of the Littleton Industrial Development Corp.

LIDC and its partners have worked to expand the park, which is at full build-out, leaving LIDC eyeing the next and fourth phase of expansion, on 42 acres of formerly town-owned land behind the transfer station.

A road is being built to show prospective new park tenants the land.

The related infrastructure, notably a culvert and utilities, have required what has been a lengthy process.

“Finally, our permitting and our engineering is done, and if Mother Nature holds out a couple more weeks, we’re going to be able to install a concrete culvert that has taken six months to build as well as bring utilities over and finish our road up to the parcel,” said Stearns.

“We’re actually pretty excited about that. We will be able to get to the parcel and we’ve already been in conversations with two or three business that are eager to have more discussions regarding the park ... and other parcels within the park. We’re already looking at grants for our next expansion of utilities up into that phase four. We’re looking forward to bringing more businesses to town and creating more opportunities, more jobs.”

On the housing front, Angela Cleveland, planning coordinator at the North Country Council, has been meeting with employers around the region to discuss the housing challenges.

One solution, she said, are accessory dwelling units, which are being recognized more.

“Business owners especially could help us in that,” said Cleveland. “An ADU is a separate living unit on a property where there already is a home. They’re usually about 300 to 1,200 square feet. It does provide a separate living space that can be connected to the home or disconnected, and both of those are allowed by right in residential zones [under] state law.”

The state has moved the needle a lot when it comes to allowing ADUs, which are great for teachers, those in the workforce, and for kids returning home, and the units provide independent living, she said.

“A lot of folks are thinking

about downsizing and living in those and renting out their own home,” said Cleveland. “They fit nicely into neighborhoods. You may not even know your neighbor has an accessory dwelling unit. It might be attached.”

Some local banks have already invested in ADU mortgages, among them Mascoma Bank, other banks are investigating it, and it’s a great way to explore adding more housing units in the region, said Cleveland.

The North Country Council is looking to remove more barriers to ADUs, she said.

The council has received funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for a series of free open houses, the first one of which is scheduled for Dec. 4 at The Rocks Estate.

“We’ll have experts,” said Cleveland. “We’ll have banks, a couple of architects, and folks who have expertise in developing and planning so we can answer your questions and hopefully remove some of those barriers.”

Toward the end of Monday’s chamber luncheon, Duane Coute, general manager of Littleton Chevrolet, thanked Taylor Caswell, a Littleton native who until October 2025 served eight years as commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs.

Caswell was a visionary who provided strong leadership for the engines of the state’s economy, said Coute.

“His impact deserves our highest recognition,” said Coute. “He dedicated his energy to ensuring that the 603 is without a doubt the greatest place on Earth to live, work, and play for everybody ... Thank you, Taylor Caswell. We appreciate you so much for what you’ve done for northern New Hampshire and beyond.”



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ON THE COVER

Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to parade viewers during the 38th annual Littleton Christmas Parade on Friday, Nov. 28, 2025. (Photo by Paul Hayes)



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Littleton Chamber, Town Pay Tribute To Community Leaders

Town To Dedicate Town Report To Copenhaver, Ward, Moore

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — During its 33rd annual economic development summit at the Elks Lodge on Monday, the Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce paid tribute to three town leaders who died in 2025.

In a presentation titled “honoring lives well lived,” Steve Kelley, member of the advisory town-school budget committee, remembered Brien Ward, Bob Copenhaver, and Eddy Moore.

Kelley, a good friend of the three, also read a letter from Gov. Kelly Ayotte highlighting Ward’s impact on the community.

Chad Stearns, board president of the Littleton Industrial Development Corp., asked for a moment of silence for Ward.

Ward launched the annual economic development summit and was part of the original group, said Angel Larcom, executive director of the Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce.

“I take comfort in knowing that today we brought it around full circle,” she said. “He origi-

inally started having this event here at the Littleton Elks Lodge, and it’s nice to bring it back. I think he would approve ... We’ve lost some giants this year. He is one of them.”

Littleton has a strong history of community leadership, as demonstrated during Monday’s chamber gathering, which recognizes three decades of challenges, innovations, and successes “while at the same time committing ourselves to continuing the efforts of those who came before us to elevate our community to even greater heights of prosperity,” said Kelley.

“Within the last year, Littleton has lost two icons of our community, both of whom in their own way demonstrated an ability to challenge us, as they say in the military, ‘to be all that we can be,’” said Kelley. “In many ways, Bob Copenhaver, along with many of his contemporaries, was ‘economic development’ before Brien Ward, through his leadership ... While many communities rely on ‘town hall leadership,’ the ‘Littleton Advantage’ has been that we have had many community leaders operating outside of,



During the 33rd annual Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce economic development summit on Monday, Steve Kelley, member of the Littleton budget committee, paid tribute to Bob Copenhaver, Brien Ward, and Eddy Moore, three community leaders who died in 2025. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

but in conjunction with, town government, that have dedicated themselves to the pursuit of economic innovation and expansion that has led to the economic engine that is Littleton today.”

Their list of accomplishments is long, said Kelley.

Copenhaver chaired the board of the Littleton Savers Bank and served on and led the boards of Littleton Regional Hospital, Littleton Rotary Club, Littleton Industrial Economic Development Corp., Hydroplane Regatta, and

much more, he said.

Ward served on the select, school, and planning boards, was a Little League baseball coach, served as a state representative, and founded Littleton’s Economic Development Task Force, said Kelley.

“It just begins to tell the story of their involvement in their community for the betterment of all,” said Kelley. “It goes without saying, but I will say it anyway, there is no town in New Hampshire that would not be a better town if they were fortunate enough to have a Bob

Copenhaver and a Brien Ward as leaders of their community.”

With emotion, Kelley read Ayotte’s letter to Ward’s wife, Connie, and the Ward family. He also thanked the governor for taking time out of her busy schedule to recognize Ward.

Ward, said Ayotte, lived a life marked by devotion to his family, to his community, and to the North Country, and his loss will be felt across the state.

“Brien’s dedication to Littleton and the North Country was profound,” said the governor. “He gave decades of service as an advocate, a leader, and a trusted voice for his community. Whether through his work in local government, his years practicing law, or his tireless efforts to make Littleton stronger and more vibrant, Brien always led with optimism, integrity, and a deep belief in the people around him. His impact is woven into the fabric of the town, in the organizations he helped shape, the initiatives he championed, and the countless lives he touched along the way ... His legacy will live on in Littleton, in the North Country, and most of all, in the hearts of those who knew him.”

Copenhaver died on Jan. 6 at

the age of 85, Ward on Nov. 8 at the age of 73, and Moore on Nov. 13 at the age of 86.

“As I was collecting my thoughts on how to properly memorialize Bob Copenhaver and Brien Ward, I got a call — or, rather, a text in today’s vernacular — from Frankie Porfido informing me that Eddy Moore had passed away,” said Kelley. “While Eddy did not have the ‘jump off the page’ personality of a Brien or Bob Copenhaver, Eddy has from time immemorial done ‘yeoman’s work’ for the town of Littleton, serving as chairman of the Select Board, 34 years as chairman of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, commissioner of Water and Light, budget committee, and much more. It is fitting that we take this occasion to recognize and remember their contributions and to keep them in our prayers as we move forward doing our best to emulate their efforts on behalf of the town of Littleton.”

During the Littleton Select Board meeting on Monday, board members, at the request of Selectman Ed Hennessey, agreed to dedicate the 2025 town report to Copenhaver, Ward, and Moore.

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Brighten Season During Littleton Home Decorating Contest

LITTLETON, N.H. — GoLittleton.com announced the annual Holiday Home Decorating Contest will begin on Monday. It’s a festive tradition that invites every Littleton resident to deck their halls (porches, driveways, and rooftops) in holiday lights and decorations.

“With everything happening this time of year, it’s wonderful to have something that brings the whole town together in a fun and cheerful way,” said Veronica Francis, contest organizer and GoLittleton.com manager. “Whether you go all-out with lights and inflatables or keep it classic and cozy, every decorated home adds to the magic of the season in Littleton.”

Judging is scheduled for the week of Dec. 14. Decorated homes will be assessed by local viewers, and winners will be announced on Friday,

Dec. 19 at the Littleton Community Center.

The top prize this year is a new Explorer Portable Low Smoke Wood-Burning Fire Pit, donated by the Littleton Home Depot branch. Additional sponsors that support the contest are State Farm - Brad Bailey Agency, Eames Realty Company, Travis Lewis, Realtor at Coldwell Banker Lifestyles, Badger, Peabody & Smith Realty and Polly’s Pancake Parlor.

All Littleton residents are welcome to participate. Complete an entry form on GoLittleton.com before Dec. 12, and then “let your holiday creativity shine!” Francis noted.

A full list of participating homes will be posted on GoLittleton.com so families can tour the displays and enjoy the holiday lights all around Littleton.

\$2.5 Million Sewer Plant Article Goes To Ballot Vote

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The warrant article seeking up to \$2.5 million in bonds for emergency repairs to the wastewater treatment plant will go on the ballot as written following a special deliberative session Monday, when town officials broke down costs for rate payers.

The session, which will be followed by the ballot vote from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dec. 29 at the town highway garage, drew a dozen residents, some of them budget committee members.

The emergency funds for the plant — which was built in 1988 and serves about 1,500 sewer users — are for upgrades and new equipment to the secondary process to maintain plant operations and permit compliance with state and federal regulators.

In 2025 alone, one clarifier was replaced, but the sludge de-watering system failed twice, the oxidation ditch rotors failed, and untreated wastewater was discharged.

Presently, everything in the facility is undersized, which means if there is a peak wet weather event raw wastewater can overflow beyond the facility confines, said Joe Ducharme, division manager for Hoyle Tanner, which was brought in by the town several years ago to develop a long-term upgrades plan for the plant.

“The equipment is old,” he

said. “It’s obsolete. There’s a lot of rust and degradation at the plant. It’s time to upgrade the entire plant. But that’s not what we’re here to talk about. We’re here to talk about emergency repairs, and that’s what we’re calling phase one. That request is for \$2.5 million. There’s critical equipment that has broken down.”

The funding request will pay for new de-watering equipment, oxidation ditch upgrades, and new headworks.

Sludge dewatering failures are currently requiring the transportation of sludge to outside facilities at a cost of about \$9,000 a week, compared to \$8,500 for the entire month when the equipment was functioning, said Eric Oliver, director of Littleton’s public works.

“We’re at the mercy of other treatment plants taking our sludge,” he said.

If they can’t take it, that puts Littleton in a bind and a need to transport a greater distance, he said.

What had recently been two facilities taking sludge is now down to one, said Oliver.

In 2025, some untreated wastewater entered the nearby Ammonoosuc River, which could result in fines, said Ducharme.

The state, though, did not impose a fine because the team the town of Littleton assembled has been working with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to address all the issues, he said.

“There’s not any pressure yet because I think DES sees that the town is doing the best they can to keep the plant going and they have a plan,” said Ducharme. “The request is to get some permanent pieces in place so the plant is fully operational again.”

In the long term, the new equipment will increase the plant’s wastewater capacity, he said.

The plant currently treats an average of 1.5 million gallons daily.

Once repairs are made, the facility will be able to handle 5.4 to 5.5 million gallons daily during wet-weather peaking and added hydraulic loads without overflow, said Ducharme.

Currently, it can handle 3.5 million gallons, but it can overflow channels when capacity exceeds 4 million gallons, he said.

Budget committee member John Goodrich supports the emergency expenditure and said that, for the future, there needs to be a trusted way of gauging the status of equipment.

Such plants are expensive and require maintenance, and can’t be run well without a good maintenance plan, he said.

“We want to make sure we do that so we don’t get so far behind next time,” said Goodrich.

Resident Tom Alt, who is not a sewer user, called the current condition of the plant a “train wreck” that “shouldn’t have gotten this far.”

Town officials have previously said the plant racked up many years of deferred maintenance. Several years ago, the town began putting in place a comprehensive corrective action plan, in consultation with the state, which previously listed deficiencies.

As for funding the \$2.5 million and who will foot the bill, town manager Troy Brown said Littleton is most likely looking at a 15-year bond rather than a 20- or 30-year bond to keep bonding and debt down as much as possible.

Sewer ratepayers are billed based on their water usage, and the average person uses about 1,000 cubic feet per month or 12,000 cubic feet per year, he said.

A 15-year bond would add an extra \$200 to \$300 annually for the average rate payer, and most likely closer to a \$200 increase, said Brown.

With interest, a 15-year bond for \$2.5 million at an estimated 5 percent interest rate would yield about \$1 million in total interest and a total cost of \$3.5 million.

Brown spoke of the team and plan in place, and how actual costs could be lower.

“I can assure that we couldn’t have had a better team in place to handle this situation and get us to this point right here where we have solid numbers and have a plan,” said Brown. We’re asking for up to \$2.5 million. It doesn’t mean we’re going to bond \$2.5 million. Our estimates are very conservative. If we only need \$1.9 million, that’s what we’re going to bond.”

To offset costs, the town is also looking into grants and other funding sources, though it can’t use grants without voters first passing a warrant article, he said.

“If we don’t do it, user rates will go up because we’re going to have to start paying fines,” said Brown.

For the towns it works with, Hoyle Tanner always projects 20 to 25 years of future growth and looks at a town’s past 20 years of growth, said Ducharme.

Currently, the Littleton plant is operating at well below half

capacity, he said.

Resident Mark St. Hilaire noted that town officials previously said they are looking at another funding request, possibly at town meeting and in the neighborhood of \$12.5 million for a next phase, as well as more possible requested money beyond.

While there will be an additional bonding request, Brown said he doesn’t yet know what the number will be.

To a question by St. Hilaire, Ducharme said it would not be less expensive to build a new plant from scratch because the current plant needs to be kept operating as pieces are put in place and the facility has to be kept in the footprint it’s in, which is a tight footprint, because the entire town collection system comes to that point.

As for future phases, the town can go after a stack of funding sources to defray costs, he said.

After an 80-minute deliberative session, voters agreed to place the \$2.5 million article on the warrant as presented and without amendment.



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Community Center Seeks \$500,000 Grant

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — To complete major renovations at the Littleton Community Center, the center's board of directors is seeking a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant.

A required public hearing is being aimed for the Select Board's Dec. 22 meeting, fol-

lowed by submission before the Jan. 26 grant application deadline.

Because CDBG funding through the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority must be applied for and accepted by government entities like towns on behalf of nonprofits like the community center, the center's board reached out to town manager Troy Brown.



The Littleton Community Center, whose annex is pictured here raised in July so foundation work can proceed, is seeking a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant to advance major renovations. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

"This project is unique," Brown said during Monday's Select Board meeting. "There is funding available, but we're going to be on a very tight timeline to put together the pre-application requirements."

Donna Lane, a CDBG grant writer for 40 years who previously wrote applications for the town of Littleton, will be the writer for the community center application.

The big renovation work at the community center is currently occurring at the carriage barn, or annex, behind the community house.

"We've been working on the carriage barn to prevent its collapse by putting in a new foundation and replacing the rotted framing," said Kathleen Smith, who serves on the community's board. "We will be re-roofing it in the spring, but we want to

return it to its original use as a community gathering place that will accommodate 50 to 100 people ... youth groups and so on. That's a pretty big project. In addition, we want to do some deferred maintenance on this place [community house] and make the third floor usable, which it hasn't been because we don't have an HVAC system that will keep it comfortable up there. We also have to rearrange the fire egress on the third floor so we have two stairwells accessible."

In June, the community center was awarded a \$1 million federal grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission, though that grant will need to be matched, said Smith.

"That's why we've been looking for other funding sources and called on Donna," she said. "For us, if we were to be awarded \$500,000, this would put us over the top because Maggie Goodlander's office gave us \$400,000 when the federal government reopened. That got put through on the USDA budget."

For CDBG funding, towns can request up to \$500,000 for a proj-

ect, which would go a long way for the community center, said Lane.

Towns can apply for up to the maximum amount for housing, public facilities, and economic development projects, as well as for up to \$350,000 for emergencies.

"There's a whole lot of funds that you can access," said Lane.

The last CDBG money that Littleton was awarded was in 2014.

Applying for the community center grant would help Littleton get its feet back into the CDBG pool, she said.

"You're in a rare position because the town of Littleton is primarily low- to moderate-income, which is a rarity in the state," said Lane. "This project wouldn't work in most communities."

After applying for the community center grant by Jan. 26, the town can apply again for another project after July, which is when the new year starts for CDBG funding, said Lane.

"You have a lot of opportunity here," she said.

NH Renews Appeal For Info In Unsolved 2001 Homicide

CONCORD, N.H. — Attorney General John M. Formella and New Hampshire State Police Colonel Mark B. Hall announce, on behalf of the New Hampshire Cold Case Unit, a renewed appeal for public assistance in the unsolved homicide of Louise Chaput.

On November 22, 2001, Louise Chaput, 52, of Sherbrooke, Québec, was found deceased off the Glen Boulder Trail in Pinkham's Grant. She had traveled to New Hampshire for a short hiking trip and was last seen on the afternoon of November 15, 2001, near the Appalachian Mountain Club's Joe Dodge Lodge. An autopsy determined that she died of stab wounds, and her death was ruled a homicide.

Chaput's vehicle, a silver Ford Focus, was located two days earlier at the Direttissima Trailhead, but several of her personal belongings, including a dark blue Kanuk sleeping bag, a blue backpack with a Canadian insignia, and her car keys were never recovered.

On November 22, 2025, the anniversary of Louise's death, her daughter, Constance, expressed the family's ongoing hope for answers.

"Thinking of my mom today brings back



Louise Chaput. (File photo)

the immense void her loss left in our lives," Constance stated. "I was only 10 years old when she was taken from me. She was a devoted mother, a psychologist who cared for vulnerable people, and someone whose love of life was contagious. We still don't know who committed this irreparable act. If anyone remembers anything - no matter how small - please come forward. It could finally help bring us the truth."

The N.H. Cold Case Unit continues to

actively investigate the case, and is particularly interested in hearing from individuals who hiked in the Pinkham Notch region on November 15, 2001, or who were part of organized hiking groups, clubs, or informal hiking meetups active in the area during that period. The Unit also encourages anyone who may have participated in early online hiking forums or listservs discussing conditions in the White Mountains in late 2001 to contact investigators. Even a small recollection may help clarify Ms. Chaput's movements and interactions that day.

"The passage of time has not diminished our resolve to find out what happened to Louise Chaput," emphasized Senior Assistant Attorney General R. Christopher Knowles, N.H. Cold Case Unit chief. "We know someone out there saw something, heard something, or encountered something that can help us understand her final hours. Even the smallest detail could provide the break that brings justice for Louise and peace for her family."

The New Hampshire Cold Case Unit urges anyone with information to come forward. All tips can remain anonymous. Email: coldcaseunit@dos.nh.gov, or call (603) 271-2663

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Chamber Summit Highlights Local Arts And Economic Impact

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Live entertainment and its boost to the local economy, along with a bill sponsored by the North Country's state senator to encourage more state spending on the arts, were highlighted during the 33rd annual Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce's economic development summit on Monday.

The executive directors of two North Country arts groups cited the benefits that they said extend far beyond the stage.

In 2025, The Loading Dock — located along Mill Street, run by its founding executive director, Jason Tors, and registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2023 — celebrates 10 years in Littleton.

Its mission is to build community and creativity by presenting performing and visual arts from emerging and established artists of all ages, said Tors, who serves on the New Hampshire State Council for the Arts as well as on the Littleton Cultural Arts Commission.

"We began hosting live music in early 2015 and have been at it ever since," he said. "Over the past 10 years, we've seen how a small 100-person capacity room can enrich the cultural offerings of our community within Littleton and branching out deeper to the North Country and Northeast Kingdom of Vermont."

In 2024, The Loading Dock participated in the first in-depth economic research study of the live music sector in New Hampshire. The study focused on live entertainment stages that are independently owned and operated, including venues, promoters, and festivals, and are not controlled by multinational corporations or publicly-traded companies.

The study results are specific to the entire state, not just to the North Country, said Tors.

"New Hampshire's independent live entertainment industry drives \$212 million in state GDP, \$392 million in economic output, and \$13.9 million in tax revenue," he said.

The industry also supports 2,633 jobs as well as \$15.5 million in offsite spending at hotels,

local restaurants and shops, transportation, and more.

"The sector is both a cultural anchor and major economic force," said Tors. "Please consider supporting local independent live music stages like The Loading Dock here in Littleton, Colonial Theatre in Bethlehem and of course Theatre UP in Littleton and the Weathervane Theatre in Whitefield. We bring a lot to the community, culturally as well as economically."

Angel Larcom, executive director of the chamber of commerce, called the study numbers powerful.

"Our life would be very dull if we did not have the arts," he said.

Renovating the Masonic Temple along Main Street for a small performance venue, rehearsal space, and main office is Theatre UP.

"The name community theater embodies the essence of who we are," said Lynne Grigevich, executive director for Theatre UP. "For nearly half a century, Theatre UP has created exceptional experiences that enrich our community. And this next phase will impact our region in even greater ways."

For 45 years, Theatre UP hasn't just staged stories, but has built economic infrastructure in town and has been a consistent, dependable engine of local economic development driven by three key values, she said.

"The first is immediate and visible — high-quality programming," said Grigevich. "When the curtain goes up, it is a direct economic infusion into our Main Street. People travel, not just from the next town, but from other counties and bordering states, drawn by the excellence on the upstage. When they come, they buy dinner before a show, grab a drink afterwards, sometimes stay the night. The theater is a crucial local tourism engine. We help validate our town as a cultural destination and ensure reliable business for surrounding merchants. Quality arts means sustained dependable revenue that feeds our local economy."

The second value is a critical workforce development engine, primarily through robust youth programs, like the UP Academy and theater workshops, she said.



During Monday's 33rd annual Littleton Area Chamber of Commerce economic development summit, Jason Tors, founding executive director of The Loading Dock, spoke of the cultural and economic important of live arts entertainment. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

"The young people on our stage and in our classrooms are learning far more than line delivery and choreography," said Grigevich. "They are mastering essential soft skills that every employer demands."

Such skills include collaboration and problem-solving, and by investing in youth programs, Theatre UP is investing directly into the future talent pool of local businesses and ensuring that the community's youth are confident, capable, and ready to lead, she said.

Thirdly, Theatre UP is an engine of inclusive opportunity that touches every demographic and provides vital social and economic opportunities for actors, designers, and technicians, some of whom travel from out of state, said Grigevich.

But there are opportunities for local senior citizens and volunteers, she said.

"It's giving seniors purpose and meaningful roles, whether as actors, ushers, seamstresses, or board members," she said. "It keeps them engaged, healthy and connected."

And valuable volunteer opportunities strengthen the social fabric and contribute to overall community well-being, an often overlooked economic factor, said Grigevich.

Theatre UP's mission is expanding with the renovation of the former Masonic Temple building, which is on track to be completed in the spring of 2026, she said.

"The new space will be fully

support, past present and future, to ensure that we may continue to invest in economic and social returns so vital to the North Country."

In 1979, the parents of state Sen. David Rochefort, R-Littleton, brought him to the Weathervane Theatre for the first time to see "Peter Pan."

Since then, he's been back for almost every season.

"It instilled in me a great appreciation for the arts, and particularly live performing arts," said Rochefort. "There's nothing like it, to see the magic that takes place."

During the 2025 budgeting process, a \$1.5 million appropriation to support New Hampshire arts was completely cut out of the budget.

When the biennium budget came to the Senate, Rochefort and state Sen. Dan Innis, R-Bradford, fought to get it back in, but the best they were able to do was restore just \$150,000, which equated to a significant drop in funding and led to six of the seven state arts employees being cut from the department.

"It really was a big loss," said Rochefort.

During the budgeting, there was a belief by some lawmakers that there's no return on the money that the state has spent on promoting the arts, he said.

The data in Concord is more than 10 years old and needs updating, said Rochefort.

"What I was hearing anecdotally is for any penny that we put in, it's a four to nine times return on the arts," he said.

Rochefort said he observed the activity in Whitefield when there was a Weathervane performance and in Littleton for a Theatre UP show.

"I would say there is a return," he said. "Look at the license plates — Maine Connecticut, Vermont. I've talked with people that come specifically for the Weathervane and stay the weekend just to see shows."

For 2026, Rochefort is sponsoring Senate Bill 522.

"It's going to reestablish the commission to study the economic impact of the arts and culture," he said. "We're going to put data behind what our thoughts are. I am confident that the data will support supporting the arts."

That way, when the next state budget is being developed, arts proponents can produce the study results, he said.

"We will be able to go back to the Legislature and say here's the data, here's the proof, it's a good investment and it's an economic driver, not only in Manchester, Portsmouth, and Nashua, but north of the Notch," said Rochefort. "So that's what's coming."

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Littleton Water And Light Advances Battery Storage At Substation

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — A warrant article that voters passed less than two years ago to allow a battery energy storage system on a St. Johnsbury Road substation used by Littleton Water and Light could be heading back to a town vote because of a technicality.

In March 2024, residents voted 1,059-303 to allow the town to lease nearly 10,000 square feet of land at 1533 St. Johnsbury Road to Convergent Energy Solutions for an initial term of 20 years and another term of 10 years to develop a battery energy storage system to benefit LWL customers by allowing LWL to use stored energy instead of purchasing more expensive energy from ISO-New England during

peak energy demand hours.

Convergent Energy wrote the 2024 article.

On a future article, because the town is no longer partnering with Convergent, the company's name might have to be replaced with the word "vendor" to keep it deliberately generic.

"We just didn't wish to pursue an agreement with that company," Lori Hogan, CEO of LWL, said during Monday's Select

Board meeting. "We've been advised that warrant is null and void and we have to go to warrant again."

LWL and the town, though, will consult legal counsel to determine whether a new vote will be required.

A 2002 town vote of 1,145 to 225 allowed LWL to use the town-owned St. Johnsbury Road land. The area had been approved by the Littleton Zoning

Board of Adjustment to be used for an electrical substation.

Today, battery energy storage systems are self-contained units, are becoming more common, and are part of substations to boost efforts to shave peak energy during peak times, said Hogan.

Shaving energy is a term that means reducing electricity consumption during high-demand periods.

"It would be connected directly to the substation just like any circuit or switch," Hogan said of the storage system. "The only reason we are asking for a lease is because we would not own the equipment. The equipment would be owned by the vendor and they would operate the equipment through a lease with the [LWL] commissioners. Then, they get a percentage of the savings to provide the equipment and operate it."

"It's the future," said Selectman Roger Emerson.

The battery storage systems are everywhere now, and about 20 in the past year are coming online in Massachusetts alone, said Hogan.

For the 2024 Littleton vote, the town went through questions, including about safety, said Emerson.

"It's on a good parcel because there's really not a lot around it," said Hogan.

It's also on a dead-end road, said Littleton Fire Rescue Chief Chad Miller.

In the event of a fire, flames would not be doused with water, but with a special substance.

Personnel can receive fire guidance and training, said Hogan.

There's a lot of engineering for the systems, there are new National Fire Protection Association standards on best practices, and LFR personnel will work through the details as they come, said Miller.

The chosen vendor will also be insured, he said.

"Like Roger said, this is the future," said Select Board member Linda MacNeil, who also serves as a LWL commissioner. "It's coming one way or the other ..."

"It's an ability for us to maintain electric rates as stable as we

can make them into the future because ISO-New England, they're going to get their money one way or another," said Hogan. "And if we have battery storage and are in peak shaving, then they're going to come on with another fee and I don't want to be in a situation where we don't have a battery storage and we're paying double fees now and we're taking on a larger portion of transmission cost than we should be taking on. It's part of our strategy for keeping the rates level."

The original warrant article with Convergent called for an annual lease payment of \$1 to the town, on the rationale that the system itself would provide the chief benefit of stable energy costs for ratepayers. The \$1 language was amended at deliberative session to read that Convergent's payment to the town for the use of the land shall be as negotiated by the Select Board.

In addition to learning if the article will need to go back to a vote, the town will also need to find out if the 2002 voter approval for LWL's use of the land will allow the negotiation of a long-term lease with a private company, said town manager Troy Brown.

Miller agreed, and said while municipal entities like LWL are exempt from zoning regulations, a private company might not be and it therefore might behoove the town to add a zoning amendment to allow battery energy storage systems.

"There's some work, there's some legal guidance that's needed here," said Brown.

Increasing the lease amount to generate additional revenue for the town can also be discussed, he said.

With Convergent, it had been a major LWL concern with that particular vendor itself, thus the parting of the ways, said MacNeil.

In consulting with legal counsel, the town will learn if it has to go back for another vote, which it probably will, said Brown.

"My guess is legal counsel will say, 'no, the article that was passed was very specific for a specific company,'" he said. "Hopefully, we don't have to name a company and it can be generic."

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White Mountains Regional Adopts Artificial Intelligence Policy

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

WHITEFIELD — The White Mountains Regional School Board on Nov. 20 adopted a new artificial intelligence policy.

The eight-page policy, based on the New Hampshire School Boards Association model policy, outlines guidelines for the responsible and ethical use of AI in the district.

“The ultimate goal of this policy is to support learning, creativity, and innovation, all the while safeguarding student and employee data, academic integrity, and digital citizenship,” the policy states. “The policy establishes the general guidelines for the responsible, ethical, and equitable selection and use of Generative AI in the District’s educational and working environments, and directs the Superintendent to create and maintain a Plan for the Responsible Use of Generative AI.”

Among other restrictions, the policy bars staff and students from using AI to complete assignments or work tasks.

“AI is a tool, not a substitute for human creativity, reasoning, or moral judgment. Student learning must prioritize critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent mastery,” it states. “Teachers and administrators remain accountable for the accuracy, appropriateness, and equity of all AI-assisted work. Transparency in AI use fosters trust and ensures students understand

the distinction between human-generated and AI-generated work.”

Violations — including using AI to create inappropriate images or deepfakes, to bully or harass others, or to spread false information — may result in discipline.

The policy allows students to use AI only as a supporting tool for limited purposes, including idea generation, skill practice with feedback, creative exploration, study aids, and accessibility support. It specifies that students must complete readings, assignments, and final work independently.

Teachers are prohibited from using AI for classroom instruction but may use it for planning lessons, drafting assessments, and supporting students with language or accessibility needs.

Administrators are also permitted to use AI for tasks such as drafting communications, generating initial policy language, and supporting professional development, provided the resulting work is reviewed by staff for accuracy, appropriateness and tone.

The policy was put forward following lengthy review by the school district’s Education Programming Committee.

A member of that committee, school board member Kristen Van Bergen-Buteau of Lancaster, noted, “this has been worked a lot — a lot a lot — with some real scrutiny about how it will serve our district. So it’s nice to finally have it be in place.”



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Rail Restrictions Close Key North Country Snowmobile Trail, Reroute Another

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

CARROLL — New limits on railway use have disrupted snowmobile access ahead of the 2025-26 winter season.

A section of state-owned railroad from Mount Deception Road to Lennon Road in Carroll is no longer open to snowmobile use because of planned locomotive movements and inspection requirements.

"It's a pretty major trail," said Brian Mycko, president of the Twin Mountain Snowmobile Club. "Its pretty devastating to our club and to the community. There's plenty of people that live on that side of town that would use the railroad bed to access our trail system, now they won't be able to access the system without trailers."

Closing the route, known as 102 Iron Horse, will force riders

to take a 20-mile detour to reach points north, including Whitefield.

The change will also affect Yaya's Market and Deli, a frequent stop for snowmobilers.

The state Department of Transportation said the closure is unrelated to Vermont Rail System's plans for the dormant Mountain Division Line in Whitefield.

Mycko said the Twin Mountain Snowmobile Club is now beginning the labor-intensive process of rerouting the trail through adjacent properties, which requires obtaining permission from multiple private landowners. The goal is to have an alternate route ready next winter.

"Making an eight-mile long trail doesn't happen overnight," Mycko said.

The club has also launched a petition asking the state to restore access to Yaya's, where



Volunteers from the Twin Mountain Snowmobile Club have worked to overcome railway access issues ahead of the 2025-26 winter season. (Twin Mountain Snowmobile Club Photo)

riders typically fuel their sleds, warm up and grab food.

The petition states the loss of trail access will significantly impact the small, family-run business during an already challenging season, and detract from town-wide winter tourism.

"We are respectfully requesting state assistance to help the Twin Mountain Snowmobile

Club establish a new road crossing on Route 3 to YaYa's and re-establish snowmobile trail access," the petition says. "With snow already on the ground in the northern part of the state, time is extremely limited before the snowmobile season begins. Without a solution, both YaYa's and the snowmobile community will feel the immediate effects of losing

access to this critical local business."

Meanwhile, the club recently resolved another trail issue involving a rail line closure near Fabyan's Restaurant.

DOT said a trail crossing had to be moved to accommodate train movement during the winter.

"After an option on private land did not materialize, NHDOT, [the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources], and the Conway Scenic Railroad worked together to identify an alternative that kept the snowmobile trail on state-owned railroad property this winter," DOT said.

The solution preserves Corridor 11, a major north-south route that carries heavy snowmobile traffic, including rentals from local businesses.

The department said the fix is temporary and will need to be revisited during the off-season.

"Longer term use of this new trail alignment and crossing will require a more permanent crossing to be constructed, and a crossing agreement to be executed, to ensure safety and compliance standards are met. Conway Scenic operates on this section of state-owned railroad property," DOT said.

Mycko said preserving the crossing required extensive negotiations among multiple state agencies and volunteers.

"It's not easy to have to deal with these issues, this stuff takes so much time and there's so much formal stuff that goes along with it," he said. "You can't make it happen overnight. We've done our best to work through these issues the best that we can."

He said the railroad-related issues have been far beyond typical trail work.

"This is the biggest issue that I've seen," said Mycko, a 10-year club member. "We do come up with landowner issues every once in a while. All it takes is one upset trail owner to shut down a trail. But we haven't had too many issues like that recently."

The added challenges come as volunteers are already working intensely to prepare trails for the season, which officially begins Dec. 15.

"Once we get some snow and can start grooming, the work is just continuous," Mycko said earlier this month. "We still have a lot of signs to put up. I'm at Bretton Woods now, there's four to five inches of snow on the ground, and there's still a lot of work to be done."

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