



# The Littleton Weekly Record

THURSDAY, FEB. 29, 2024

LOCAL NEWS

Board Keeps 24/7  
Pantry Open

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FREE



Cyan Magenta Yellow Black



**Hiring Dilemma.** Shallow Pool Of Viable  
Town Manager Candidates. **Page 2**



# So Far, A Shallow Pool Of Viable Town Manager Candidates

BY ROBERT BLECHL  
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Following the resignation of former Town Manager Jim Gleason nearly a month ago, the Select Board has found itself in a shallow pool of viable town manager replacement candidates.

Littleton Police Chief Paul Smith is currently acting as interim town manager on a part-time basis following Gleason's final day on Feb. 2.

To date, board members themselves have been going through the resumes submitted, with no candidate interviews having yet occurred and no one candidate rising to the fore.

During their meeting on Feb. 26, one board member suggested enlisting Municipal Resources Inc., a consulting firm for municipalities that can find interim and permanent candidates, though at a cost.

"With all the resumes that we've received for the town manager, I really think that we need to go on a much more professional level and I would really like to engage MRI and have them vet these," said Select Board member Linda MacNeil. "Unless we can convince Paul to take the position permanently."

Indicating that he does not want to be the permanent town manager, Smith said MRI is a good option.

Board member Carrie Gendreau said she spoke with Michael Cross, Littleton's human

resources director, who used to work for MRI.

"He is doing everything right now, short of going to college campuses, that he did for MRI," she said. "I don't know. We could spend triple the money and have it done."

"The thing with MRI is, number one, it's a professional organization, it's money well spent, and they do all the vetting that we need," said MacNeil. "They do the preliminary background checks on all of these. I'm just not comfortable with what we've gotten in-house already."

Several new applications have recently arrived for the board to review, said Gendreau.

"In talking with Mike today, he said there's not much in the hopper," said Gendreau. "There's not much out there."

Currently, Thursday, Feb. 29, is the deadline for the last applicants.

Roger Emerson, chairman of the Select Board, agreed with MacNeil and said that MRI could reach out to more candidates than what the board has been doing.

The Select Board could turn over the process to MRI, though before that, can first have a conversation with them to see how much more of a process it would be compared to what the town has done, he said.

"Mike said he's doing every single thing he's done with MRI," said Gendreau. "We'd be paying triple the cost."

"But to get to the level that we need for a town manager, to be able to run a multi-million dollar



*Finding themselves in a shallow pool of viable town manager candidates, some Littleton Select Board members on Monday suggested enlisting a professional organization for candidate vetting and recruitment. Left to right: board members Carrie Gendreau, Linda MacNeil, and Roger Emerson. (Photo by Robert Blechl)*

budget, to deal with what they have to deal with, I'd just feel better having a professional organization dealing with this," said MacNeil. "I don't want to be pennywise and pound foolish."

Emerson agreed, though saying that some candidates who have applied can first be interviewed by board members before the board

reaches out to MRI.

If the board takes the MRI route, it might be beneficial to see what MRI can offer on the recruitment side rather than solely the process side, said Littleton Fire Rescue Chief Chad Miller.

Emerson agreed.

## In Split Vote, After Concerns, Board Keeps 24/7 Pantry Open As Is

BY ROBERT BLECHL  
Staff Writer

After safety concerns and a split board vote, the Bethlehem Select Board on Feb. 26 agreed to keep the volunteer-run Little Free Pantry open 24/7 and functioning as is, without installing a nighttime lock or camera.

However, its relocation from municipal property, where it is currently located outside of town hall, to private property remains a future possibility.

Suspected tinfoil drug paraphernalia found inside the shed-like structure in January — which prompted a board discussion on Feb. 12 about the implementation of possible safety measures — follow past concerns of people found sleeping in it and, on multiple occasions, of all of the food being emptied out in the middle of the night.

Following the find of the paraphernalia, the board reached out to its insurer with the question of if there is additional liability in light of known issues.

The insurer said that the town will not take on

additional liability or increased insurance costs, but agreed with Bethlehem Police Chief Alan DeMoranville's assessment, which is to take some precautions and add a camera between certain hours because it would limit exposure, Bethlehem Town Administrator Mary Moritz said to board members.

The question during the previous discussion was is it a risk for board members to not put controls in place when they are aware of concerns, said board member April Hibberd, who supports some controls.

"There's risk with any structure, and my understanding from what [Moritz] just said is there's no additional risk," said board member Veronica Morris. "We can take steps to minimize risk, but not taking them does not inherently increase risk."

Morris had been looking into what is called an attractive nuisance in New Hampshire, a specific category of "trouble-making buildings," and said the Little Free Pantry doesn't come close to the definition.

Board member Mike Bruno suggested that the board consider DeMoranville's suggestions, including the locking mechanism that can be

activated remotely and purchased for \$500.

"I think there should be a lot of weight put on that," he said.

Because the pantry benefits from town electricity that keeps it heated and lit and essentially rent-free, he suggested that the town shouldn't have to pay for the lock.

The least that can be done is installing a lock, and if those who run the pantry and who donated the building can't abide by the terms, then perhaps they should consider moving it to private property, said Bruno.

"I disagree pretty strongly," said board member Nancy Strand. "The idea of what the Little Free Pantry means and what it stands is pretty clear and any restrictions on it in terms of locking or cameras flies in the face of the purpose of the Little Free Pantry. I feel the only reason this got brought up is because of the possible drug paraphernalia that was found."

Drugs and the emptying out of food is not the fault of the pantry, and if the pantry is removed, those engaging in such activities will do them elsewhere, she said.

The top half of the pantry door has a window that allows anyone outside to look inside and

see who is in it, said Strand, who added that the police station is next door in the event of an issue.

"I just don't see why we have to penalize the Little Free Pantry that's providing a very laudable need, a laudable gift, to the town," she said.

The pantry also offers fresh food left over from the community dinners, said Strand.

"I think it serves a great need and I don't want to see it changed," she said.

Selectman Bruce Caplain agreed and said there have been very few isolated incidents since the Little Free Pantry opened, which was in December 2021.

Back when the pantry proposed for town property was being discussed, resident Chris McGrath said he brought up the concerns being voiced today.

McGrath said recent find of drug paraphernalia has led to more than one parent coming to him with safety concerns about their children playing on the adjacent playground.

"That bothers me," said McGrath, who suggested finding a way to get the food to those



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## News Briefs

## Whitefield Economic Development Corp. To Dissolve

WHITEFIELD — After 40 years, the Whitefield Economic Development Corp. is no more.

The non-profit's board of directors on Feb. 21 made the "difficult decision" to dissolve WEDC.

In a letter to the Whitefield Select Board, WEDC leadership wrote, "The decision was not made lightly."

"As you know we are an all-volunteer board. Our numbers have dwindled and we do not have enough members to help us fulfill our mission to 'Improve the standard of living in Whitefield through community partnerships, business development, and innovative economic growth.'" The most responsible course of action is to dissolve," the letter said.

As part of the dissolution process, WEDC will transfer all remaining assets to the Town of Whitefield.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the Town of Whitefield. Thank you for your understanding and support," the letter said.

Incorporated in Aug. 1983, the Whitefield Economic Development Corp. once played a key role in Whitefield's economic development.

At different times, WEDC supported efforts to: recruit new businesses to the downtown and the industrial park; revitalize and beautify the town center; bolster White Mountains Regional Airport; and improve infrastructure, walkability, and parking near Kings Square.

Former Select Board Chair Peter Corey gave the following description of the non-profit in 2002: "WEDC is the town chartered non-profit [community development corporation] that is responsible for all economic development in the community to include the Whitefield Industrial Park. It is a small non-profit all volunteer organization that serves as clearing house for coordination and information for parties interested in developing a business or industry. WEDC works on behalf of the selectman and has relatively broad authority within its charter."

The Whitefield Economic Development Corp. notably arranged a land transfer from Fleet Bank to the town for a municipal parking lot, helped bring a medical clinic to the community, and created the town's first web site.

In 2021, WEDC was authorized by Town Meeting to negotiate land sales in the industrial park. They did so the following year, when a 25-acre parcel was sold to Presby Plastics Inc. for the construction of a manufacturing facility.

Most recently, WEDC was working to develop a 72-acre industrial park property. WEDC President Kathleen Kopp said the goal was to "get something in there that produces tax money and creates jobs."

A preliminary engineering study was completed in 2023. WEDC wrote, "It gave us good data as to what areas are economically feasible for the town to identify as potential lots."

It is unclear how the project will proceed without WEDC.

Whitefield Economic Development Corp. is the second regional economic development agency to dissolve in less than a year.

In April 2023, Northern Community Investment Corp. members voted to shut down the 45-year-old organization due to ongoing challenges.

That led the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund to acquire NCIC's assets and programs including a \$9 million loan portfolio and \$500,000 in St. Johnsbury-Lyndon Industrial Park land holdings.

Since 1975, NCIC had significantly contributed to economic development efforts in Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties in Vermont and Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties in New Hampshire.

Through 2,000 direct and leveraged investments, NCIC pumped over \$540 million into local businesses and communities, creating or preserving more than 20,000 jobs.

## Select Board To Eliminate Public Works Director Position

WHITEFIELD — The Select Board on Feb. 26 announced a high profile job cut.

The position of Public Works Director — which oversees the town's highway, water, sewer and transfer station operations — will be dissolved March 24.

After that date, each department will be run by its own manager, and a Road Agent position will be established to run the highway department, town officials said.

The three-member Select Board unanimously supported the plan as a way to control spending and protect taxpayers during tough economic times.

"Our budget was extremely tight this year," said Selectman Shawn White, "We're trying to find every way possible to save money."

The proposal was crafted in non-public meetings without input from Public Works Director Rob Larson.

Larson was notified of the decision in an executive session, before Monday's regularly scheduled board meeting.

"I was very, very surprised by it," Larson said. "I was not consulted, none of the employees were consulted."

### ECONOMIC PRESSURE

The staff shakeup marks the beginning of a Select Board push to streamline municipal government and make it more cost effective.

Those efforts are meant, in part, to offset school spending, White said.

New Hampshire continues to downshift education costs to local taxpayers and Whitefield's local education tax rate increased \$1.06 in 2023 and could go up another \$2.68 this year.

"We're looking at restructuring the town and trying to make things more efficient," White said. "[Eliminating the Public Works Director] is just the first step."

White said the Road Agent (hourly wage) will be paid less than the Public Works Director (salary) and that savings will be seen in future budgets.

"There's going to be savings in coming

years," White said.

However, Larson, who was offered the Road Agent position, disagreed with the cost cutting argument for the change.

"They did offer me a position of Road Agent, which by the time they get done with, that will equate to almost the same wage," Larson said. "So, in my opinion, they're not accomplishing what they said they want to accomplish."

### DIFFERING OPINIONS

Larson feared the elimination of the 15-year-old Public Works Director position could have far reaching, unintended consequences for the Town of Whitefield.

He questioned if a return to separate highway, water, sewer and transfer station department heads would stall progress and delay economic development efforts.

"In my opinion, the town's going to go backwards, because there would be no single focus to town improvement," Larson said.

In particular, he worried about the town's ability to manage grants without a Public Works Director, especially for large-scale projects like the planned \$2.7 million Union Street reconstruction.

"The projects that we've got in the works now would be in jeopardy," Larson said. "Any time you have a grant project it's heavy oversight by the federal government on how you're spending the money. If you're not managing that project to their satisfaction you could lose the grant."

However, the Select Board disagreed, saying the decision was made after much thought.

The Select Board first looked at streamlining town operations late last year when they began the budget writing process, they said.

"We were kicking around ideas to try to save money, to restructure, and to make things more efficient," White said. "It's been a long process because we've discussed it quite a bit, because we don't want to make any hasty decisions that would ultimately hurt the town in the long run."

In the end, they made what they considered a difficult but necessary choice.

Said White, "It's not easy for us to do, but it's just something that needs to be done."

## Council Approves \$3.4M For State Fire Academy

Following a \$2.7 million award in 2021, the state fire academy in Bethlehem has received an additional \$3.371 million in federal money approved by New Hampshire Governor and Council on Feb. 21.

See **News Briefs**, Page 5

**ON THE COVER:** Kayden Hoskins pulls up for the game-winning 3-pointer as No. 2 Littleton knocked off No. 6 Woodsville 59-58 in a New Hampshire Division IV boys basketball semifinal at Bedford High School on Monday, Feb. 26, 2024. (Photo via Perfect Photos/ball603.com)

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# News Briefs

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The total \$5.8 million in facility investments for the Raymond S. Burton Fire and EMS Facility, which debuted a decade ago, will expand training options in the North Country as well as launch a new regional commercial driver’s license certification program run by the New Hampshire Department of Motor Vehicles.

Like the first round of funding, the new round comes from federal American Rescue Plan Act stimulus money.

The previous \$2.7 million in ARPA funding was awarded to improve local first responder recruitment and training, with \$1.5 million allocated for facility improvements that encompass the new three-bay heated garage, which will provide space for apparatus storage and a decontamination area with showers.

The new garage will replace the existing garage, which will be demolished.

A second classroom will be built within unfinished space in the existing facility.

The balance of the \$1.3 million was allocated to the DMV to add CDL training to expand opportunities for North County residents.

In making the new request for \$3.4 million, New Hampshire Department of Safety Commissioner Robert Quinn said, “Over the last two years costs have escalated due to inflation, the remote nature of the location, obsolete infrastructure, unique site topography, and market volatility.”

“Recent estimates have identified a shortfall in funding required to complete the project as intended,” he said. “These additional funds will help support continuation of the improvement by allowing extensive site clearing, improved electrical, water, sewer, HVAC, classroom expansion, and construction of a garage to house fire training apparatus and store clean personal protective

clothing used during practical training in the drillyard.”  
The project design has been completed and the Department of Safety has confirmed with the Department of Administrative Services, Division of Public Works, that the classroom renovations and new storage garage will be bid during the summer of 2024, with the intent to submit the contract to Governor and Council before the Nov. 30 deadline, said Quinn.

The fire academy in Bethlehem, in structures previously occupied by the U.S. Forest Service, marks the second state fire academy in New Hampshire, outside of Concord.

It was launched in 2014 to provide more training opportunities for local first responders and to keep training closer to home.

More recently, it is being used to help address what has been a shortage of certified first responders across the fire and EMS services and to bump up the numbers of those with basic- and advance-level certifications.

The academy, located along Trudeau Road between Routes 3 and 302, serves more than 60 municipalities and nearly 60 fire departments in northern New Hampshire.

The planned expansion will double the size of the facility.

## Planning Board Approves Permits For Mystery Telecom Company

WHITEFIELD — The Planning Board on Feb. 6 approved a permit application to construct a 6,000-square-foot commercial building.

The applicant, real estate developer Transport Equipment Leasing Corp. of Andover, Mass., plans to construct the facility on a 2.5-acre property located off Route 3, across from Dollar General.

Mark Sanborn, representing Transport Leasing Corp., did not disclose the building tenant, but those familiar with the project said it would be a telecommunications company.

According to meeting minutes, Sanborn said “the company coming in will be good for Whitefield as it will be bringing cable to the area,” according to meeting minutes.

As proposed, the 26-foot-high, 6,000 sq. ft. commercial building will be located on land owned by the Robert Stiles Revocable Trust.

Half of the building will be office space and half will be a warehouse “for cable boxes/cables & connections,” Sanborn said.

Sanborn said the facility will house seven employees at most times but 20 during safety meetings held every other week.

The Planning Board approved the change of use/site plan review permit application and the development permit application.

The change of use permit was approved on condition the applicants obtain a state driveway permit, town water/sewer connection permits, and a signed private road agreement with the town, and that outdoor lighting be downward facing to limit light pollution.

According to online records, Sanborn and his brother, Scott, have over 30 years experience in the construction and storage industries.

Their businesses include Abco Renal & Storage, which rents mobile storage and office trailers in areas of Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and Dumpsters R Us, which specializes in waste removal, hauling and recycling.

## Town Meeting To Decide On Community Power Plan

LANCASTER — The Select Board on Feb. 20 agreed to place the community power plan on the Town Meeting warrant.

Voter approval of the plan is required so that the town can sell

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# ARTICLE 3 IS WRONG FOR LITTLETON

## ARTICLE 3 WOULD DENY LITTLETON THE BENEFITS OF CHARITABLE GAMING

✗ The Littleton Planning Board is opposed to Article 3.

*Littleton Planning Board Draft Minutes, January 3, 2024*

✗ Article 3 would be overridden by state statute.

*Caledonian Record, Feb 7, 2024*

✗ Town leaders expressed concern over negative impacts.

*Caledonian Record, January 4, 2024*

Vote NO on Article 3 – March 12, 2024

# CHARITABLE GAMING IS RIGHT FOR LITTLETON

## The proposed charitable gaming facility will:

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## News Briefs

Continued from Page 5

low-cost electricity directly to residents.

The warrant article, drafted by the town Energy Committee, reads as follows:

"To see if the Town will vote to adopt the Lancaster Community Power plan, to authorize the Select Board to implement the plan, and to take all action in furtherance thereof, pursuant to RSA 53-E. The Lancaster Community Power plan is an opt-out program that offers more flexible electricity procurement. The plan will initially provide lower electricity rates for residents, or it will not launch. Initial participation in the plan can be declined, after which enrollment becomes voluntary."

The Select Board agreed to proceed with the warrant article after addressing questions about the town's community power plan application.

The Energy "Committee" filed the application with the Public Utilities Commission under the Lancaster Energy "Commission." By law, Energy Committees can submit community power applications to the PUC, Energy Commissions cannot.

However, Town Counsel found no issue with the application wording, which is under review by the Public Utilities Commission.

"The Public Utilities Commission submitted [the application], which is a very good sign that it will pass," said Energy Committee member Teri Anderson. "We're confident the plan will be approved."

Anderson urged the Select Board to put the question to voters now rather than wait one to two years to re-submit it for Town Meeting approval.

"If the town wants it, fine. If not, then it kind of all stops there," Anderson said.

Anderson said the town would not launch the community power program until late summer or early fall if the warrant article were approved. That would allow ample time to inform the public and fine-tune the program.

At the request of the Select Board, Energy Committee members agreed to present the article and field questions at Town Meeting.

Lancaster's community power application can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/48cizax>

The state community power law approved in 2016 allows municipalities to purchase and resell energy independently and establishes a process for them to do so.

As a first step, the Select Board created the five-member energy committee on July 17.

The committee's charge was to draft a community power plan allowing the town to sell low-cost electricity directly to residents if approved.

The plan must be approved by the state Public Utilities Commission, the Select Board, and Town Meeting voters.

If approved, the town will launch a community power program and partner with an energy broker to sell low-cost wholesale energy directly to residents.

For more info on community power visit <https://bit.ly/3SgApTL>

## Extension Nears For Littleton-Bethlehem Recreational Rail Trail

In the coming months, Cross New Hampshire Adventure Trail (xNHAT) will undertake upgrades to segments of the four-season recreational rail that extends from Woodsville through Littleton to Wing Road in Bethlehem.

"There's a lot of projects underway and I'm looking forward to this spring and summer to complete things," said Marianne Borowski, founder of xNHAT.

A big project is extending the rail trail from Oxbow Drive at the Littleton-Bethlehem town line farther into Bethlehem to Wing Road, in all about a 2.6-mile stretch, which currently still has rails and ties.

Beginning in May, or April if possible, the plan is to pull up the existing rails and ties on the discontinued rail line and then apply a hard-pack surface.

The pulling work will take about a month, and Borowski expects the new surface to be applied by early summer for bicycling and other recreational uses.

"The rail trail has been under construction through Littleton north to Bethlehem and pointed toward Whitefield for quite a while," she said.

Leading the conversion of the 7-mile stretch from Industrial Park Road to Wing Road was the town of Littleton, which received federal grant money to pull up the rails and ties.

A number of years ago, the town completed the first 2.2 miles and then xNHAT came into the picture, after OHRVs were prohibited from using the segment under federal rules that prohibit OHRV use when projects are funded with federal dollars.

xNHAT led the conversion of the next 2.2 miles to Oxbow Drive.

The next segment from Oxbow to Wing is all paid for and a contractor will soon begin the work, which will be managed by the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails.

"I feel that this is a big accomplishment because this is the original seven miles that was supposed to be done a number of years ago," said Borowski.

The work became a little complicated along the approach to Wing Road and across from Gilbert Block because that segment is still considered an active railway line, even though a train hasn't rolled along it for decades.

The plan is to fill in areas between the rails along the short stretch of active line so walkers and bicyclists will have a nice way to walk or ride without having to deal with the ties, said Borowski.

The pulling work is paid for with a \$104,000 federal grant through the Bureau of Trails, for which xNHAT provided a 20-percent match that is funded by a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's Tillotson Fund and the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy.

"To make it even better, I'm planning to put new surface material down, a nice hard-pack surface," she said. "Right now, it's not horrible, but it still has some gravel, some ballast from the rail line, some sandy spots, some rough places. Over time, those big chunks seem to come to

the surface. We want make it so everybody can enjoy it and we want a nice bike ride without bouncing around too much. The townspeople deserve it. It's right there in town where everybody can get on it."

xNHAT is currently working on securing the separate funding for the new surfacing.

"The snowmobile clubs are thrilled about this because they will now be able to connect into Littleton from Bethlehem during the 'low snow' times of our winters," said Borowski.

Once the Oxbow-to-Wing stretch is complete, a ribbon cutting will follow some time in the year.

The state owns the rail trail as well as what is still considered an active line from Wing Road into Whitefield, Dalton, and Gilman.

As part of what's called the Twin States Railroad Rails to Trails project, the effort to decommission that stretch from an active to an inactive railroad corridor and connect the rail trails in Vermont and New Hampshire will likely take a few years and more paperwork, said Borowski.

New Hampshire currently has about 14 miles of trail and Vermont to St. Johnsbury about 20 miles.

Even though there hasn't been a train along it for years, and any train would now likely fall into the water near the Wing Road stretch, it's officially an active line on paper, Borowski.

And while it's still owned by the state and the state can make a new railway out of it or make anything, including a utility corridor, at any time, towns and recreation groups can in the meantime use it as a recreation corridor, she said.

But based on the state allowing tie and rail pullings along other segments, it's a reasonable bet to conclude that recreational use is the future, she said.

xNHAT is also working to preserve and mark some railroad artifacts, such as telegraph poles, mileage and whistle markers, and water tanks, said Borowski.

The installation of picnic tables and plaques that narrate the history will help make it a unique recreational rail trail, she said.

"The thing that I like about New Hampshire rail trails is on a number of these trails the history is being preserved along the way," said Borowski. "I've been in other states where everything is kind of gone."

Currently, bike repair stations with flat tire kits, larger air pumps, and other larger tools and essentials are placed at Thayer's Inn in Littleton, the historic train station in Lisbon, and the parking lot by the covered bridge in Woodsville, to supplement bicyclists' traveling kits that often include smaller pumps and items.

Once the Riverfront Commons is complete in Littleton, a large kit will go there, said Borowski.

While OHRV use is prohibited from Industrial Park Road north to Wing Road, it is allowed from Industrial Park Road south to Woodsville.

Another project that is ongoing and will continue in 2024 is repairing some rough spots along the trail from Industrial Park Road in Littleton to Woodsville, about a 20-mile stretch that is called the Ammonoosuc Rail Trail.



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Obituaries

Conrad Schofield

Oct. 14, 1929 - Feb. 20, 2024

Conrad Schofield was a veteran of the Korean War. He passed away peacefully at the age of 94 at his residence in Landaff, N.H.

Conrad's legacy extends to the founding of Schofield's Septic Service in 1970, a business that became a cornerstone of the community. Conrad was known for his unwavering work ethic and commitment to service.

He enjoyed riding his Harley Davidson in the summer and his snowmobile in the winter. Conrad made many trips to Nova Scotia on his Harley.

He is survived by his two sons, Kevin and Carl.

He will be buried at the New Hampshire State Veteran's Cemetery in Boscawen, N.H. Services will be held privately at the convenience of the family.



Bricen Finnegan Brewer

Bricen Finnegan Brewer was born on Feb. 22, 2024, at Littleton Regional Hospital to his proud parents, Kevin Brewer and Danielle (McMinn) Brewer of Groveton, N.H.

Before birth, there was an early awareness of a life-limiting disability. Resenting the strong pressure to terminate, instead choosing to love, to cherish and honor the precious existence of our child was the only option. A little bit of heaven was sent down to earth far too briefly. While gone from our presence, we rejoice that he is now an Angel of God in heaven. However unfair life may seem to some, we know you were made for a far more beautiful place.

Bricen is survived by his parents and older brother Declan. Great Grandparent(paternal) Catherine Bishop of Lancaster, Grandparent (Maternal) Richard McMinn of Groveton, Grandparents (Paternal) Mike and Della Bishop of Lancaster, and Randall Brewer of Maine. Numerous Great Aunts and Uncles from the local area and neighboring states ME, MA, VT, NY stretching to IN, TN, NC, AL AND FL. Also, several

Aunts, Uncles, Cousins and extended family and friends from the local area down to FL.

Bricen was predeceased by great-grandparents (maternal) Charles and Arline McMinn. Betty and James Robinson. (Paternal) Terry and Drucella Rice. Emily and Dick Brewer. Grandparent (maternal) Colleen Griffin, (Paternal) Grandparent Robert Bishop. Great Uncle Charles McMinn. Great Aunt Darlene Palmer. Uncle Randy Brewer.

There will be no services at this time, a private Gathering and Buriel will be held at a later date, at the convenience of the family. In Lieu of flowers, donations can be made to : The Chromosome 18 Foundation, Chromosome 18 Registry and Research Society 7155 Oakridge Dr. San Antonio, TX 78229 or to the charity of one's choice in remembrance of Bricen.

Do not be sad, for we will live in the sunshine of Bricens brief but Beautiful existence given to us, we will cherish the moments we were blessed to enjoy on this journey.

Wherever we go whatever we do, we'll never forget to remember you. When We close our eyes at the end of each day, we will see you there in our dreams. Our homie with an extra chromie, until we meet again, we'll miss you and the life we should have shared for the rest of our days. We will hold you in our hearts forever. Dance with the angels and watch over us, we love you always.

Family wishes to thank all the outstanding comprehensive teams of medical specialists and professionals who were involved with the care of our son and family during this time. To offer your condolences to the family please visit [www.rossfuneral.com](http://www.rossfuneral.com)

Robert "Bob" Arden Richards,

Robert "Bob" Arden Richards, 89, of Littleton, N.H., passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Feb. 16, 2024, at Country Village Nursing Home in Lancaster, N.H., after a period of declining health.

Bob was the third child born to Doris (Sargent) and Raymond Richards of Lyman, N.H., on Sept. 11, 1934. He was raised on the family farm in Lyman and cherished sharing many stories of his youth with his family.

On Feb. 23, 1957, he married Evelyn Lewis. They raised their two children together, sharing their lives for 67 years.

He served in the United States National Guard from 1953



to 1961. Bob held various jobs over the years, including positions at Connors and Hoffman Shoe for 12 years, A.N Farr Company, the Town of Littleton, and spent 15 years with the NH State Highway Department in Lisbon until his retirement in 1995.

Bob was described as a practical man who found comfort in being at home. He always took pleasure in the visits of friends and family to his garage or porch. He could often be found in his garage, listening to country music while tinkering.

Bob excelled at small engine repairs, particularly lawnmowers, and enjoyed woodworking, crafting many beautiful birdhouses.

He was a devoted Chevy enthusiast and took pride in his vehicles.

He enjoyed watching the Boston Red Sox and NASCAR races, cheering on his favorite driver, Dale Earnhardt Sr. Bob was always up for a game of rummy and adored his grand-dog, Bogie.

In his younger years, Bob's hobbies included hunting, fishing, gardening, camping, snowmobiling, and taking his truck and family to the Lancaster Fair.

He was predeceased by his parents, siblings, Richard, Roland, Margret, and William, as well as many in-laws.

Bob is survived by his wife, Evelyn Richards; daughter, Gina (Guy Haynes III); son, Raymond Richards; grandchildren, Peggy King (Brian), Guy Haynes IV (Sara), and Robert Arden Haynes (Marnie); great-grandchildren, Kate Masters, Taylor Fisher, Guy Haynes V, and Ruby Haynes; sister, Alice Moulton; sister-in-law, Elaine Richards; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Bob's family would like to express their gratitude to all the staff at Country Village for the excellent care they provided him and for brightening his days.

At Bob's request, there will be no funeral services.

To view Robert's online tribute, or to send condolences to his family, please visit: <https://obits.csnh.com/robert-bob-richards>.

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## News Briefs

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The trail repairs are in partnership with the Lisbon and Bath OHRV club and involve placing high-quality hard-pack surface material in spots that have been washed out by storms and in divots and canals on the trail that have been created through erosion, with the rationale that what is a good trail for bicycles is good for OHRVs.

xNHAT will pay the upcharge.

What Borowski called a “magic mix” of gravels and some fines that came from limestone quarries in Vermont was put down two summers ago as a test and has held up well after big rainstorms.

“The other thing that has worked really well is there’s no dust with this material,” she said. “It’s been great for the people who live or work near the trail. We will put more down this year.”

Other projects along the Presidential Rail Trail, from Whitefield-Jefferson east toward Gorham, involves restoration work to make the recreational corridor more resistant to storms and to minimize storm-related damage as much as possible.

In both states, Borowski said the snowmobile clubs that also use the trails have been indispensable partners.

“The collaboration between the snowmobile clubs, the NHBOT [Bureau of Trails], the xNHAT and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has been great,” she said. “Four seasons of recreational activity on these rail corridors. Overgrown, decaying, and unused rail corridors are of no benefit to the community, so I feel this work is going to be of great benefit to all in the community.”

### WMRSD Considers Credit Requirement Change

WHITEFIELD — The White Mountains Regional School Board heard draft changes for credit requirements on Feb. 22.

A proposal by the Education Programming Committee would reduce the graduation requirement from 26.5 to 26 credits.

WMRHS would remove two required credits across three subject areas: Social studies (4.5 to 3.5), math (4 to 3.5) and the elimination of a half-credit freshman seminar. The electives requirement would increase by 1.5 credits (7 to 8.5). Those changes would be phased in by the 2027-28 academic year.

Under the plan, White Mountains Regional would continue to exceed the state graduation minimum requirement of 20 credits and the minimum requirements of surrounding school districts.

School Board member Kristen Van Bergen Buteau of Lancaster, an education programming committee member, said the move would “right size” education for students and staff alike.

She said the proposed change would ease pressure on staffing, allow teachers to offer more electives, and allow students to explore more career paths.

“It feels like a pullback for us, but really it allows for us staff the programs better, to have better choice for our students, better work satisfaction for our teachers, and it still exceeds what’s happening in other schools around the area,” Van Bergen Buteau said.

The Education Programming Committee presented the draft changes to get school board feedback.

Not everyone was sold.

School Board member Ben Jellison expressed concern that the slight change reflected lower expectations.

Others defended the plan.

JROTC instructor Peter Russo said the proposed credit requirement would still challenge students while easing school workforce challenges.

“3.5 [math] credits is still a heavy lift for a lot of kids,” Russo said, adding, “The more credits we require, the more robust our staffing requirements become.”

Meanwhile, Van Bergen Buteau said the proposal would provide more flexibility, options and electives for everyone at WMRHS.

She said it could boost students’ test scores and academic performance in the process.

“Why should our students take so many classes and perform poorly when they could (1) take fewer classes, (2) still exceed the state standards, (3) still exceed what our other neighboring school districts are asking of their students, and (4) maybe start to see better performance in the classes that they are taking?” Van Bergen Buteau said.

The Education Programming Committee also suggested changes for athletic eligibility.

The committee proposed reducing the minimum course load for junior/senior student-athletes from six to five classes.

WMRHS co-principals Patricia Ainsworth and Michael Curtis said under the current system, some junior and senior student-athletes enroll in extra classes simply to meet the six-class requirement, then drop them when the season ends.

“We’ve had multiple students who are entering the end of the winter season with 28 credits, and they’re taking six [classes] to be eligible, and when the season’s over, they are now at four [classes],” Curtis said.

The six-class requirement can be particularly burdensome for advanced placement (AP) students, who prefer to take fewer, more intensive classes but must pad their course load for sports eligibility.

“AP are accelerated classes with heavier workloads than traditional classes,” said School Board member Tara Giles of Whitefield. “Many AP students are also athletes and they have to stock up on classes, it makes their life harder.”

Again, not everyone was happy with the proposal.

School Board member James Brady of Jefferson questioned the need to lower requirements for athletes.

“My problem with this is, I think I’m getting old, because I have a feeling that each year we make it easier and easier for the students, instead of trying to get them to work harder,” Brady said.

Told the proposed changes were intended to promote classroom success for student-athletes, Brady added, “That’s fine, but the higher the standards you have, the better. I don’t care what anyone says. It just seems that society as a whole, we lower and lower our standards every year.”

### After Crashes On Rented Snowmobiles, Councilor Calls For Rider Education

In the wake of recent crashes on rented snowmobiles, two of them fatal, the executive councilor who represents Coos County is calling for a rider education program to keep the sport safe and viable.

Since the season began, New Hampshire Fish and Game representatives report nearly 20 crashes, with both fatalities and most of the accidents occurring in Coos County and stemming from inexperienced riders.

On Feb. 23, Executive Councilor Joe Kenney supported legislation mandating more education and will reach out to legislators, as well as begin a dialogue with stakeholders that include the commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Safety, the New Hampshire Trails Bureau, and the snowmobile clubs.

“We’re asking what can we do to increase safety when we’re renting out machines that are high-powered machines to inexperienced people,” he said. “We’re setting them up for failure. The people who are in the business, who have the expertise on snow machines and the trail system and safety, are the people that I’ll be reaching out to. Right now, this attitude of ‘live free or die,’ that’s not going to cut it.”

Currently, riders of rental machines are often shown a short video by the rental company and given a checklist and off they go, he said.

“It’s not enough,” said Kenney.

Ideally, inexperienced riders would go through a basic certification program and/or the machines would be dropped to a reduced speed through a governor device, said Kenney.

“And we want to make sure they get a map of the trail system that explains the danger points,” he said. “They could categorize trails from simple, medium, and high risk. But accidents will happen. You can’t get away from that. But we have a trend-line that’s going up and it’s not making the state look good. We will need to work with the Legislature.”

First-time snowmobilers from out of state can come into New Hampshire and are excited to be out in the woods, but they’re on powerful machines that they don’t have the know-how or experience to maneuver or ride or to take emergency actions to prevent a catastrophic collision with a tree, stone wall, stump, or another oncoming rider, said Kenney.

“And obviously we have a lot of crossings onto major roadways,” he said. “Are they trained on that?”

Those in the rental industry might have a business plan of getting riders out and back so the next group can go, but Kenney said he’s always been told in his personal life, both in the military and private sector, that safety trumps everything.


“If we don’t get back to understanding how we can make this a safer recreational sport, the public is going to turn on that sport and say no more,” he said.

While skiers and hikers aren’t required to be certified,

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# News Briefs

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they're also not crossing major highways and are not on machines that, if used improperly, can hurt the rider and put others at risk, said Kenney.

"But when you're dealing with something mechanical that's motorized, that you didn't purchase, that you didn't practice on, that you didn't get to understand its capabilities, that to me is, in essence, a setup for potential crashes and safety issues," he said.

While Kenney participates in an annual snowmobile trail ride, he said he is fortunate enough to go with Fish and Game, some snowmobile clubs and law enforcement, a group that includes safety experts who have decades of experience and understand the trail system.

"But a tourist who's coming out of Massachusetts, who's never been on a machine, is not traveling with that support system," he said. "They're on their own. There are people who own snow machines and live in the the North Country and who do this as their sport who understand how to use the machines that they own. But a person riding a high-powered machine for the first time doesn't know the trail system, doesn't know how to call for help if something happens, other than 9-1-1."

In addition, some local hospitals are not set up for catastrophic accidents, and if victims need to be airlifted to Portland, Maine, or Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, the weather might not be conducive for such a lift and they might instead have to be placed in an ambulance, resulting in a loss of precious life-saving time, he said.

"We can do a better job," said Kenney.

While there's an attitude among some that it's unfortunate but not their problem, Kenney said snowmobile recreation and safety, like repairing trail damage, is an issue for the entire state because the sport and the trails are used to boost the local and state economies and travel and tourism.

"I hope the industry is looking at it, too, but it's going to take legislative action to say we need this, this, and this to make it a safer environment," he said. "It's like driver's ed. Would you give a kid who's never been to driver's ed who's 15 or 16 years old the keys to drive to Montreal? Not at all. It's got to change. It's got to be a safer environment."

Any proposed legislation would be introduced in the fall of 2024 and be taken up in the 2025 legislative session, when Kenney predicts there will be plenty of legislators who will support it.

On Jan. 23 in Berlin, a Massachusetts woman, who was riding a rental from Northeast Snowmobile and ATV Rentals in Gorham, was killed in a snowmobile crash.

On Feb. 16 in Milan, another Massachusetts woman was killed while operating a snow machine.

Coos County, from Twin Mountain to Pittsburg, has several businesses that rent out snowmobiles.

## Judge Orders Woodburn Attorney To Court

Calling it an "11th-hour" attempt to delay the trial, a judge has ordered the attorney for ex-state Sen. Jeff Woodburn to court.

On Feb. 20, defense attorney Mark Sisti filed a motion to continue Woodburn's three-day domestic violence/simple assault trial, which is scheduled from Tuesday, March 12 to Thursday, March 14, because he is the town moderator of Gilmanton and said he couldn't be at court on March 12, which is New Hampshire town meeting day.

Prosecutors from the office of the New Hampshire Attorney General objected, arguing that the trial was scheduled eight months ago and Sisti only told the court during a status conference on Feb. 15 that he couldn't be at court for the first day of the trial, which they said cannot go into Friday, March 15, because of the court's inability to shift trial dates on such late notice.

On Thursday, Coos Superior Court Peter Bornstein denied Sisti's motion to continue the trial to a later date.

"The defendant's motion to continue is extremely untimely, and the defendant has not articulated any good cause for filing this motion 'at the eleventh hour,'" wrote Bornstein.

Citing case law, the judge said courts have a legitimate interest in enforcing scheduling deadlines to manage a pending case and retain the credibility of deadlines in future cases.

The alleged victim (Emily Jacobs, Woodburn's former fiancée) also has an interest in the trial proceeding on the dates on which it was scheduled to be conducted more than eight months ago, said Bornstein.

He confirmed that March 15 is not an available trial date.

"Defense counsel has not even asserted, much less demonstrated, good cause or any exceptional circumstances that account for his failure to file a motion to continue in a timely manner," wrote Bornstein. "Defense counsel likely knew or should have known at least eight months ago that the 2024 Gilmanton town meeting was scheduled for March 12, 2024, inasmuch as the date of annual town meetings in New Hampshire is prescribed by statute."

Nevertheless, Sisti (who has served as Gilmanton town moderator since 2004) did not move to continue the March 12-14 trial after receiving the June 2023 trial notice, nor did he move to continue after receiving the August amended notice of jury trial, he said.

"Having considered the procedural history and posture of this case and all other relevant circumstances, the court denies the defendant's untimely motion to continue," wrote Bornstein.

Amanda Grady Sexton, director of public affairs for the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, applauded the ruling.

"Victims in New Hampshire are often subjected to unnecessary delays in the courtroom," she said. "Defense attorneys should not be permitted to use continuances as a legal strategy to benefit their clients and delay justice. Victims are afforded rights under New Hampshire law and should not be subjected to these types of un-

necessary and unfair delays. Judges must take victims' rights into consideration and stop this unethical practice. Six years is far too long for any victim to wait for justice."

The trial comes after the New Hampshire Supreme Court, in March 2023, overturned Woodburn's 2021 jury trial convictions on one count each of misdemeanor domestic violence and simple assault and remanded the charges back to the superior court.

## Broadband Expansion Efforts To Soon Be Visible In Littleton

As the state advances its broadband expansion efforts, work is expected to be visible in the Littleton area in the next few months.

"We will soon begin seeing more uptick in the broadband expansion locally," said Taylor Caswell, New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs commissioner. "We have two contracts out, one with the Electric Co-op and one with Consolidated, and they're working on at least 50,000 new addresses statewide to get high-speed Internet fiber-optic."

In 2022 and 2023, the New Hampshire Governor and Council awarded the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative a \$50 million contract and Consolidated Communications a \$40 million contract, with the money coming from federal stimulus funding that New Hampshire received through the American Rescue Plan Act.

"I expect this year that Littleton is probably going to see some activity in the summer from Consolidated," said Caswell. "They haven't started engineering yet, but they're looking at

nearly 5,000 addresses that will be passed with fiber."

Residents, businesses, and organizations could tap into the high-speed fiber if they choose.

Expansion work in other North Country communities, in Berlin and Gorham, has already begun, and Consolidated could begin working in other communities, such as Lisbon, in 2024, said Caswell.

"People will see a lot of activity," he said. "That's getting people to at least a minimum of 100 mbps [megabit per second], a 100 mbps download and 100 upload. Most of what's getting installed is way higher than that already."

Work in Littleton is expected to begin around April and will likely extend through a good portion of the summer.

The fiber that will be installed is from Fidium Fiber, which is a Consolidated Communications company.

The expansion work will extend into 2025.

"Our schedule for broadband is we want it done in '26, but I think we're going to be done in '25," said Caswell.

For high-speed Internet, the BEA also has a program tailored for communities.

"It's a little bit more localized and it's probably going to be launching later in the year," said Caswell. "We have to wait for the feds to approve it, but it's a matching grant program that will probably be available by the end of the year for communities if they want to use it."

According to the BEA, tens of thousands of Granite State residences and businesses are in the path of broadband expansion.

In addition to the ARPA funding, the project


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SPECIAL THANKS TO THE LITTLETON OPERA HOUSE



After safety concerns and a split board vote, the Bethlehem Select Board on Monday agreed to keep the Little Free Pantry open 24/7, without the installation of a lock and a camera. (File photo by Robert Blechl)



Pantry

Continued from Page 2

who need it while addressing safety.

“I’d hate to see something happen one day if a child goes in there,” he said. “I know drugs can be found everywhere — this is the world we live in now — but if I ever hear of someone getting hurt inside the pantry because of drug paraphernalia, I’d be very upset. I don’t want to get rid of the pantry. It does serve people in town. I’m just trying to think of ways to make everyone happy.”

Drug paraphernalia has been picked up in town before, including during roadside cleanups, said Morris, who added that she has never called the police when it was found and said it doesn’t strike her as a big issue.

“I think everybody agrees we want people to have access to the food 24 hours a day,” said Hibberd. “I don’t think that’s disputed. I do think there’s been concerns raised. We have to consider it and look into it in the best interest of everyone. I don’t want to restrict food. My solution was to have that little box on the outside for overnight. But I do think it would be a different conversation if that tinfoil was found in one of the dugouts ... No matter where it is, if we have the ability to control it, to make it safe for everybody, I think that’s what we have to do.”

Morris said she’s opposed to putting up a camera or installing a lock and would rather move the pantry to private property.

“These are things that happen regardless of the time of day,” said Morris. “How does restricting a few hours in the middle of the night change the fact that this could happen whether it’s 2 o’clock on the afternoon or 2 o’clock in the morning?”

“The situations that we discussed happened overnight, but were discovered in the morning,” said Hibberd.

Hibberd also said fentanyl is a powerful drug and just a small amount found can pose a risk to a child, who could die.

Morris made a motion that the Little Free Pantry continue to operate as it does at present, without cameras or locks.

“We’ve already had this discussion once and it sounds like nothing has changed based on the insurance information,” she said.

Before taking the vote, Bruno noted that he read the emails from Bob and Estelle LaFleur, who donated the building for the pantry and who oppose restricted hours, locks or a camera, and said appreciates what they wrote as well as the mission of the pantry.

“I get that, but if that structure is on town property we do hold some level of liability,” said Bruno. “Because of that, we have a responsibility to ensure that all aspects of safety are covered. If that means putting a special lock on or having a camera installed it is, at a minimum, showing we’re making an attempt to do something to right this, to ensure that it doesn’t happen again. I think it’s something we as a board should be looking at.”

Bruno would prefer that the pantry not be moved and said he has a lot of faith in DeMoranville if he recommends a camera, lock, or reduced overnight hours.

Hibberd agreed and said she doesn’t know what the exact solution would be.

In some ways, Hibberd said she agrees with the idea of the pantry going on private property if there is someone willing to take it, because then the pantry could continue with its mission and avoid the conflict of it being on town property, knowing the concerns.

The board voted 3-2 to allow the pantry to continue operating as it has been, with Morris, Caplain and Strand in favor and Bruno and Hibberd opposed.

“I think it is reasonable to have a conversation with the LaFleurs about possibly working to identify an alternative location, because this is probably going to be a continuing problem for the town,” said Morris.

One idea is to see if the Sinclair Lot in downtown, poised for redevelopment, could be an alternative location or if someone in downtown would be interested in having it on their property, she said.

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