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**REPORTER**

A community supported newspaper

Vol. 29, No. 15

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

\$1

## Brandon SB approves revised budget; public vote on April 30<sup>th</sup>

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Brandon Selectboard convened for its regular meeting on Monday evening. Despite concerns that eclipse-related traffic might make a live meeting difficult for some, all five Selectboard members and the full town management team were present, along with a score of attendees.

Though late on the agenda, the focus of the meeting's energy was on the revision to the proposed budget that failed at the ballot on March 5. The Brandon Budget Committee had stripped \$241K from the original \$3,796,180 budget, primarily through a reworking of the original \$300K property-tax allocation for paving.

In the revision, only \$85K of property-tax revenue will be allocated for paving. An additional \$100K will be allocated from the town's 1% Local Option Tax fund and \$115K will be eliminated by removing the High Pond Road repaving project from the FY 2025 schedule.

The Budget Committee had also decided to authorize the purchase of only one new police cruiser instead of two, reducing the line item for that expenditure from \$48K to \$24K. The \$24K allocation represents one year of payments on a three-year payment plan for the vehicle. The next two budget cycles will also include \$24K payments for the cruiser.

Additionally, the Budget Committee had decided to discontinue the automatic mailing of ballots to all registered voters in Brandon, reverting to the pre-COVID policy of mailing ballots only to those who specifically request them. This change will save the town roughly \$2K.

However, the Selectboard did not adopt the revision on  
*(See Brandon SB, Page 12)*



Photo by Dale Christie

## A moment of unity and a wonderful weekend

BY STEVEN JUPITER

When the moon's black disc clicked into totality, like the final piece in some ancient puzzle, my heart pounded in my chest. I stood gaping at one of

the most beautiful things I've ever seen. It made me feel connected to our earth, our moon, our sun, our universe. It made me feel connected to our ancestors who had no means of

understanding the science behind what they were seeing. It made me feel connected to the brilliant scientific minds that predicted with astonishing exactitude when it would occur.

And it made me feel connected to everyone who stood gaping with me at that moment, not just the family and I friends I was physically with but every-  
*(See Eclipse weekend, Page 7)*



**LISA PELUSO ENJOYS the Zombie Walk in Brandon on Sunday, March 7. Scores of zombies rose from the dead to boogie down Park Street to Michael Jackson's "Thriller," culminating in a recreation of the video's choreography in front of the Brandon Inn. See pages 16 & 17 for more photos!**

## OVUU Board to offer 1% cut on proposed budget

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—At its meeting on Tuesday, April 2, the Otter Valley Unified Union (OVUU) School Board voted 5 to 2 to cut \$268,751.13 from the proposed \$27,247,823 FY2025 budget that was defeated on March 5. The new proposed budget of \$26,979,072 will be put before district voters on Tuesday, April 30.

The reduction of \$268,751.13 represents a 1% cut. The specific budget items being cut are a "late run" afterschool bus for the Middle School, the Nordic ski team, the Dean of Students position at Neshobe, and \$164K in assessments from OVUU to RNESU for its share of certain district expenses, such as spe-

cial education, mental health professionals, and transportation.

The Board debated whether to pursue deeper cuts but settled on 1% in the belief that deeper cuts would have unacceptable consequences for educational quality. RNESU Finance Director Brenda Fleming had also prepared a 3% reduction proposal that would have eliminated world languages from elementary education and consolidated classrooms at Neshobe and Lothrop, among  
*(See OVUU budget, Page 6)*



# Shannon Bryant, first woman on Sudbury Selectboard, looks to strengthen her community

BY STEVEN JUPITER

SUDBURY—Shannon Bryant wasn't aware that Sudbury had never had a woman on its Selectboard when she won a seat at this year's Town Meeting. A 1990 Otter Valley grad, she'd moved back to Sudbury with her

wife, architect Shelly Pottorf, after several decades living and working around the country. The thought of running for Selectboard hadn't even crossed her mind until long-time Selectboard member Art Keefe vacated his seat and folks in the Sudbury community asked her to run.

"I just wanted to help people find solutions," said Bryant. She'd been particularly impressed by the way the Selectboard had responded when she

and Shelly pointed out a problem with paving on their street. "I want to be part of that, helping people in my community resolve issues."

Others in town clearly felt that Bryant was right for the job.

"A man who'd lived in Sudbury for 50 years but had never been to a Town Meeting told me he came just to vote for me," said Bryant. "People were saying 'show up for Shannon.' They wanted a new face. It excites me to be a different voice."

Bryant has long felt comfortable as a woman in male-dominated environments. She was one of only two girls playing ice hockey as a teen and became a college ice-hockey coach after graduation (See Shannon Bryant, Page 13)

*Having heard stories about weekly dances on Lake Hortonia back in the day, she organized "Hootenanny Hortonia," summer concerts on the lake that folks can enjoy while on the water.*



SHANNON BRYANT AT the Sudbury Meetinghouse, formerly the Sudbury Congregational Church. Newly elected, she's the first woman to serve on the Sudbury Selectboard. A native of the area, she's come home after decades away and wants to use her position on the board to strengthen community ties and help her neighbors solve problems.

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# GARDENING CORNER

**DELICIOUS DESSERTS (ABOVE)** from the Stevens Farmstead, run by Jane Costello in Sudbury. You can find Costello at local farmers markets in Brandon, Middlebury, and Rutland. The Renaissance Farm in Brandon is famous for their flowers, including these unusual tulips (below left). Owner Diane Barrette sells subscriptions for flowers grown at her farm on Arnold District Road.

## Renaissance Farm and Stevens Farmstead, making people happy with flowers and food

**BY LYN DESMARAIS  
RENAISSANCE FARM**

Renaissance Farm is perched high above the Arnold District Road commanding a full view of both mountain ranges. It was the

in the fields and greenhouses. Part of the basement of the main house has become a seasonal farm store for Diane's famous tulips. Renaissance Farm will open as soon as they have enough tulips to pick,

takes to offer these tulip subscriptions, Renaissance Farm planted 50,000 tulips over the course of a month, last fall, and they have to replant new tulip bulbs every single year.

In addition to the tulips, Diane owns over 2,000 peony plants. Currently they ship tulips and peonies all over the United States. In fact, the farm's peonies have been featured in Ariella Chezar's book, "Home in Bloom."

On Mother's Day, these two hard working women will be, we hope, taking a break from selling flowers. They will be, the day before, at the Rutland Farmer's Market selling bouquets all day. The Saturday before Mother's Day always marks the beginning of Rutland Farmer's Market outdoor season. Renaissance Farm also sells its flowers to Middlebury Floral, in Middlebury, In Full Bloom, in Shelburne, and to florist designers all over. People can stop by the farm whenever the flag is out or by appointment. Call Shane at 401-741-7576 to set up an appointment.

When I asked Diane what she was looking forward to in 2024, she said "good weather." Diane has been raising flowers for 24 years. She's been a long-time grower at the Rutland Farmers Market. She's always adding something new: a new variety or a new flower to her bouquets. This year she's able to add roses to her availability list. Her rose bushes (See Gardening Corner, Page 10)



former home of artists Fran Bull and Robert Black. Beauty is still being created here. Diane Barrette (pronounced like the hair barrette) and her niece, Shane Howrigan, are growing thousands of flowers

which they are hoping will be April 5 or 6. Their tulip subscriptions will start around then. They do have more tulip subscriptions available at \$140, for five weeks. To give you a sense of what it



**JANE COSTELLO AT the Stevens Farmstead can also provide savory dishes and will deliver complete meals to neighboring towns.**

### Spotlight On Business PRIMERICA FINANCIAL SERVICES



**Patrick Dunn**

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goals based investing, and financial planning for individuals, families, and businesses. Please contact me for a complimentary consultation and plan.

BRANDON REPORTER

## Guest Editorial

# Please vote yes on the school budget... our future depends on it

BY JAZMIN RIVERA AND  
BRENDAN MCLOUGHLIN

We write to address you on behalf of the students of the Otter Valley Union Unified School District as to why you should vote for the school budget. Although there is so much complexity and nuance to the school budgeting process, we urge you to take action to further understand the process and listen to all perspectives. While assuredly unintentional, voting against the school budget is a vote against the future of ourselves and our fellow students.

While the issue of constructing and getting a school budget passed is complex and multi-faceted, what isn't complex is determining that Otter Valley faces many challenges. Despite how positively we feel about our school, the data shows that the majority of students at Otter Valley don't feel like the climate is positive. This is evidenced by data being analyzed in our YATST class (Youth and Adults Transforming School Together), with Mrs. Alyson Callahan, where school-sanctioned surveys found that only 22% of students

felt positive about Otter Valley's climate. Again, the issue is very complex and involves an enormous number of factors, but working towards building a positive environment in our district is going to take time and resources. Complaining about how poor the education of your

community's children is and then voting down the budget is hypocritical, and we students see this.

It may be the case that the majority of people aren't voting down the school budget necessarily because of the budget itself, but instead because of the increase in tax rates that ensue. In many

people's eyes, times are tough, the economy looks bleak, and an increase in taxes looks as though it would just worsen the general status of things. Thinking through that lens isn't effective in allowing you to understand the whole issue. The purpose of the budget should not be to put a Band-Aid on a leak in a dam. But every year, as we go through this process, it appears that way. Failing to look toward the future and past the present cripples any hope of ef-

(See *Our future*, Page 7)

*Our futures and those who follow us are in your hands. While it may be the case that the budget situation is complicated, from the student's perspective voting it down makes us feel that our futures aren't worth the increase in spending*



### Cucumber sandwiches included

EASTERN TOWHEES ARE arriving in Vermont. This bird's song is: "drink your tea"

Photo by Sue Wetmore

## Community Forums

# Rutland Area Robotics to represent VT at 2024 FIRST® Championship in Houston

A collection of successful scoring opportunities has propelled Rutland Area Robotics' IBOTS FRC team 2370 to a return to the FIRST® Championship in Houston.

A total of 93 New England based teams came together at the Big E in Springfield MA from April 4-6 to compete in the

New England District Championships. The IBOTS met three major achievements, each helping to propel them to Houston in mid-April.

Three specific accomplishments led to the IBOTS qualifying to represent Vermont at the 2024 FIRST® Championship, where teams from around the

world will gather in Houston to compete. Dan Roswell, Rutland Area Robotics President and Lead Mentor said, "We are very proud to announce that Finian Smathers has been awarded the New England District Dean's List Award for his dedication and leadership as an outstanding leader." (See *Rutland Area Robotics*, Page 5)

# 169th Vermont Wedding Association Bridal Show in Middlebury

Make your plans now to join us for the 22nd Annual Middlebury Bridal Show on Sunday April 21, 2024 at one of the most sought-after locations for weddings in Vermont! The Middlebury Inn has been welcoming generations of great gatherings of families and friends since 1827! Enjoy the perfect blend of historic charm and modern comforts in a full-service hotel situated in the eclectic village of downtown Middlebury.

Have the wedding you have dreamed of and choose from formal plated service to more casual buffet or food stations. The unparalleled food and drink at the Morgan Tavern is well known for its upscale service and down home comfort food. Come tour the property, meet the amazing staff and see what your wedding could look like at the Middlebury Inn.

Come raise your glasses and Celebrate your Engagement with

your fiancé or the whole wedding party! Meet the TOP Wedding Pros who will share ideas to help make your day magical! Listen to music, taste amazing apps paired with perfect cocktails and delicious desserts! Have FUN in the Photo Booth and sign up to win great Grand Prizes including a 2 Night Stay with Breakfast at the Middlebury Inn (\$600 value) \$250 Live Event Wedding Painting Ceremony (See *Bridal Show*, Page 11)

## The REPORTER

The Reporter is a nonprofit, community-supported newspaper managed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

Current board members are Steven Jupiter, president; Dr. George Fjeld, treasurer; Barbara Ebling, secretary. Graphic design by Sepi Alavi

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# Letter to the Community

## Budget revision: A responsive approach

The Selectboard has heard the concerns of the voters regarding affordability. A three-hour workshop session with the budget committee and many citizens produced a revised budget which was scrutinized at two additional Selectboard meetings. The revised budget cut \$241,300 in spending (6.4%) from the budget that was rejected. This is almost half of the increase previously proposed. The total spending is up 6.23% over the current year, and the amount to be raised by taxes is up 10.7%, largely because previous boards had been doing exactly what this board is being asked to do (use funds from reserves to keep tax increases lower).

The board has made actual

cuts to spending (High Pond Road and one cruiser will not happen in FY25) and has funded some needed projects using a wider range of resources (Union Street and North Street paving more than half from the 1% Local Option Tax fund rather than all from property taxes). The revised proposal retains funds in the operating budget for paving roads, though only 28% of what had been proposed.

Over the past 9 years, the Town has proposed budgets plus paving articles that were remarkably stable. These budgets plus paving articles ranged from an increase of 4.65% in 2019 to a decrease of 4.64% in 2023, and averaged an annual increase of 0.88% over nine

years. This is an exceedingly responsible sustained record of respect for Brandon taxpayers as evidenced by stable spending plans and functionally flat tax levies. General inflation in the economy and a very tight labor market have caught up with us, deferred maintenance of the police fleet has caught up with us, and less than robust local funding of road paving has caught up with us. This is still a budget that represents a significant upward adjustment, yes. But it is also a budget in Brandon's best tradition of a public process resulting in a consensus plan to deliver necessary Town services.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Seth Hopkins, town manager*

# Rutland Area Robotics

(Continued from Page 4)

ing secondary school student, both for his personal and FIRST® related accomplishments. Finn is a model for humble excellence and will now compete with his counterparts from around the World.”

Secondly, the IBOTS Impact team of Emma Cosgrove, Agatha Hopkins, Mia Jepson and Finian Smathers succeeded in guiding the IBOTS to receiving the District FIRST® Impact Award. FIRST® describes the Award as, “the most prestigious award at FIRST®, it honors the team that best represents a model for other teams to emulate and best embodies the mission of FIRST®. It was created to keep the central focus of FIRST® Robotics Competition on the ultimate goal of transforming the culture in ways that will inspire greater levels and respect and honor for science and technology as well as encouraging more of today's youth to become science and technology leaders.”

The final point generating qualifier was the exemplary performance of the IBOTS robot.

The IBOTS drive team accomplished each required mission using an autonomous and human driven robot named Tempo. Tempo was fabricated by the Rutland County area high-school team members. Specialized computer code helped to guide performance with points generated on a playing field of challenging actions, requiring tactical maneuverability, mechanical scoring, and ability to climb. High scoring matches resulted in the IBOTS making it to the final match of the semi-finals round where they performed to the high standards expected of world-class competition.

Roswell lauded the hard work of IBOTS team members and commended the many mentors, sponsors, and parents, all of whom have created an atmosphere for success. “We are ready and excited to be moving on to the Championship. We are honored to be representing Vermont.”

About Rutland Area Robotics We strive to instill a passion for science, technology, engineering, and math in our

team members. Students learn project management skills and how to work as part of a team. These are the future engineers that will become the workforce upon graduation from college. Our goal is to give them the abilities they need to excel in the workplace. Rutland Area Robotics is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

## Correction

In last week's issue (4/3/24), we mistakenly stated that Frank Farnsworth had been the editor of Dateline Brandon. He was instead the publisher and editor of The

Brandon Bugle, the successor paper to Dateline Brandon. Mim Welton was the editor of Dateline Brandon. Our apologies for the error.

## Leicester News

### Bingo, dog registration and Green Up Day will keep the town busy

The Leicester Historical Society is sponsoring Prize Bingo on Sat., Apr 13, at 1:00 p.m. at the Senior Center at the Four Corners. Refreshments sold and all are welcome!



Town Clerk Julie Delphia reminds dog owners of the requirement to register dogs. Cost information is available on the town website. To avoid penalties and fees, be sure to register your dog(s) before the dog census is scheduled.



Green Up Day is Sat, May 4. As usual, a free volunteer luncheon for workers will be held at the Senior Center from 11:30 until 1:00. Lunch tickets double as raffle tickets. Filled Green Up bags can be left at the trailer at the Town Shed that morning.

Volunteers are eligible to pick up a free Leicester grocery bag as well as choice of a Leicester cap or visor. The state of Vermont is attempting to achieve a Guinness World Record by gathering at least 5,000 pledges to help clean up trash. You can sign up at the Town Office to be part of the effort. For more information, or to volunteer to clean a particular segment of roadway, contact Diane Benware at 247-3786.



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# Obituaries

## Ashley Brook Whipple, 40, Brandon

It is with heavy heart that we announce the passing of Ashley Brook Whipple (Morcombe) age 40, on March 31, 2024, at Rutland Regional Medical Center.

Ashley, aka "Coolwhip," was born in Middlebury on October 10, 1983. She was the only child of Barbara Whipple. She grew up in Addison County and Brandon. She graduated from Otter Valley Union High School and the Diversified Occupations at the Hannaford's Career Center. Ashley always loved school. She also loved being a part of Special Olympics for a long time. She dearly loved the friendships she made there.

Ashley loved Camp Thorpe and had been attending since age 9. She loved music, dancing, making art, swimming, volunteering at Home-ward Bound, and fostering kittens for The Feline Connection.

Ashley had a wonderful sense of humor and made everyone's day better. Wisecracks with perfect timing and just a laugh melted hearts.

She is survived by her mother



**ASHLEY BROOK WHIPPLE**

Barbara Whipple, her dog Cali, and cats Dusty and Henry, who were very important to her, a brother Jason Fitzsimmons and his family, her sweet boyfriend Greg, Aunt Joy and Uncle Butch, Uncle Steve and Aunt Heidi, Aunt Sue and her fam-

ily, Uncle Mike, and Auntie Lisa. All of her "favorite" cousins, Amy Sweet and her family, Rob Whipple and his family, Zoe Smith and her family, Jackson Smith, Harper and her family and Christopher Gingras. Her Grandmother Marie Whipple and her family, Her friends Amy and Steven. Ashley had some extremely important friends in her life. Warren Burbo who became a dad to her. Andrea Galiano and her family, Ann Chartrand and her family, Debbie Lloyd, Mary Mitchell, Michael Bright, and Bashir Abdulaziz. These people enriched her life on a daily basis. Ashley was a unique spirit that truly was a light in the world.

A gathering "In Celebration of The Life" of Ashley Brook Whipple, age 40, will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2024, at 10:30 AM, at the Brandon Congregational Church.

Following the ceremony the family will receive friends at the Brandon Inn for a time of remembrance.

Donations to thefelineconnection.org or Camp Thorpe in Ashley's honor would be appreciated. Both were important to her.

Arrangements are under the direction of the Miller & Ketcham Funeral Home in Brandon.

### Obituary Guidelines

The Reporter will publish paid obituaries and free notices of passing. Paid obituaries cost 25 cents per word and will be published, as submitted, on the date of the family's choosing. For those who do not wish to purchase an obituary, the Reporter offers a free notice of passing up to 100 words, subject to editing by our news department. Photos (optional) with either paid obituaries or free notices cost \$10 per photo. Obituaries may be emailed to news@brandonreporter.com.

Submissions must be received by 11 a.m. on Monday for publication in the Wednesday paper.

# OVUU budget

(Continued from Page 1)

other cuts. "We couldn't do that to our students," said OVUU Chair Laurie Bertrand.

Board member Barbara Ebling echoed the sentiment, stating that the board could "not in good conscience" strip so much from the budget.

"I want people to know what's going away when taxes are cut," said board member Fernanda Canales, who was once principal of Salisbury School in Addison County. "3% is a hardship on the system."

OV student Brendan McLoughlin, who serves as student representative to the OVUU board, called demands for steeper cuts "hypocritical" (see Mr. McLoughlin's editorial in this week's issue, co-written with OV student Jazmin Rivera, who also served as a student rep to the board.)

Not all board members were in favor of the 1% cut, however. Board member Kevin Thornton, who ultimately voted against the new proposal, questioned whether 1% would appease voters. Mr. Thornton even suggested that the board forgo its annual stipend (approximately \$19K), though Ms. Fleming noted that the stipends had already been approved at Town Meeting.

The defeated budget had already been reduced by \$500K in an attempt to meet the statutory guidelines in Act 127, which had guaranteed a 5% cap on property-tax increases in districts that kept budget increases under 10%. OVUU had

cut staff positions to get below that 10% benchmark and more staff cuts for an additional 3% reduction were not acceptable to the board.

The state legislature, however, later repealed the 5% cap when it became concerned that some districts whose budget increases would have been significantly less than 10% were inflating their budgets because the state had guaranteed the 5% cap. OVUU, however, had struggled to make cuts to stay below the 10% mark.

*Now, the district is left with a budget that already represents steep cuts and which still might be too high for voters.*

Now, the district is left with a budget that already represents steep cuts and which still might be too high for voters.

A 1% cut represents an average annual tax savings of \$13.60 per \$100K of assessed property value across the OVUU district. So, for example, a taxpayer whose home is assessed at \$200K would likely realize annual savings of \$27.20. A taxpayer whose home is assessed at \$300K would likely realize annual savings of \$40.80. The actual amounts will vary from town to town within the district but will more or less align with these numbers.

If the proposed school budget fails again on April 30, the board will be forced to make additional cuts. It must continue to propose budgets until one is approved by voters. In the meantime, the district is legally allowed to borrow up to 87% of its previous year's budget to keep schools open, should a new budget not pass before the end of the current year's budget.

**ONLINE AUCTION**

**(1579) Kubota MX5400 4x4 Tractor, Power Equip. & Household Items**

**Auction Closes Tuesday, April 16 @ 10AM**

**Preview: Thursday, April 11 from 11AM-1PM**

The owners have sold their Crown Point, NY home and are headed South! Highlights of this amazing estate sale include: Kubota MX5400 4x4 Tractor w/ Loader (30HRS!!), John Deere 410C Backhoe, John Deere 450B Crawler Dozer, Troy-Bilt 27-Ton Log Splitter, 2011 Ski-Doo 800R E-Tec Renegade Adrenaline Snow Machine, Polaris Sportsman 90 ATV, Household Furnishings, Collectibles and SO MUCH MORE! **350+ Lots!**

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**FRIENDS AND FAMILY** gathered around Vermont to watch the moon eclipse the sun, an event that will not be witnessed again in these parts for a long time. Here, a group of friends from Brandon and Massachusetts traveled to the zone of totality in Bristol for the full eclipse experience. L to R: Courtney Fuller, Devon Fuller, Maddie Fuller, Todd Every, Peter Atlas, Tim Hennigan, and Steven Jupiter.

## Eclipse weekend

*(Continued from Page 1)*

one around the state who was standing in a field looking up in awe.

For months, we'd heard "The eclipse is coming! The eclipse is coming!", but would the event live up to its hype?

It did.

Some folks stayed close to home. Some traveled farther north for totality. But we all shared something in that moment. We watched the moon begin its encroachment, nibbling at the sun like a mouse eating a wheel of cheese. Much of the experience was predictable—the darkening sky, the temperature drop—but no one warned us about the confused mosquitos.

It's been a rough year in Vermont. Floods and tax increases have worn us down and frayed our nerves. We needed a boost

*Perhaps the seasonal timing of the eclipse made the whole thing feel especially wonderful. Coming after a dreary, grey winter and two back-to-back blizzards, the great weather seemed buoy everyone's spirits*

and we got one: this past weekend showed us once again what makes this state, and our community in particular, so special.

Brandon pulled out all the stops for Eclipse 2024. And by all accounts it was a smashing success. Our town was full of

visitors who stayed at our hotels, ate at our restaurants, shopped at our stores, and watched our performers. And all of them left with a positive impression of our little Vermont burgh. Even for those who live here, the weekend was joyous and a much-needed respite from

issues that have plagued us recently.

From Friday to Monday, everyone seemed to be in great spirits, full of anticipation for the big event, ready to simply enjoy something and leave our problems aside for a moment.

Many thanks to the Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, Brandon Rec, and all the organizations, businesses, and individuals that made an extra effort to accommodate and entertain the crowds. It was a ton of work, but it all came together, one gear slipping seamlessly into the next to the outside eye. But anyone who's ever tried to coordinate anything as big as this knows how much effort actually goes into it and how easily the best-laid plans can go awry. Kudos to all.

Perhaps the seasonal timing of the eclipse made the whole thing feel especially wonderful. Coming after a dreary, grey winter and two back-to-back blizzards, the great weather seemed buoy everyone's spirits. Apparently, we experienced the best viewing conditions in the entire country.

The weekend was proof that we can still come together in time of joy as well as in times of difficulty. We should remember that we're all in it together even as we return to the arduous, sometimes rocky work of passing our budgets and running our towns.

## Our future

*(Continued from Page 4)*

fecting true and lasting change in our district.

There is not a single item included in the budget that our school district would benefit from having removed. However, there's a nearly infinite number of things that are not included that we would benefit from having. Fiscal responsibility is essential to maintaining a healthy community but failing to look at all sides of an issue is crippling. While the first vote has come and gone, it is our utmost hope that you, the members of our community, would show up to meetings and carefully analyze every aspect of the budget. And if after all of that, you come to the decision that you could imagine anything further being stripped from us and our futures, then vote down the budget.

Know this, though: the failure of this revote would force a vote on an even smaller budget. And that plan, which has already been designed as a precaution, would involve cuts in faculty. Not just for ourselves, but for the future of our community which we all hold so dearly, please approve the proposed budget on April 30. If not, then don't you dare complain about the quality of our education. Our futures and those who follow us are in your hands. While it may be the case that the budget situation is complicated, from the student's perspective voting it down makes us feel that our futures aren't worth the increase in spending.

*Jazmin Rivera and  
Brendan McLoughlin  
are students at  
Otter Valley Union High School.*



**As the excitement of the Green Jacket unfolds, we're thrilled to invite you to our**

**GREEN JACKET POOL & WATCH PARTY**  
April 11th - April 14th



.....



**Green Jacket Pool: Pick your favorites from the list of players in the prestigious tournament. Stop by the Pro Shop to make your selections and get in on the action!**

**Watch Party: Join fellow enthusiasts at Neshobe Golf Club to catch all the thrilling moments of the tournament on the big screen. Experience the highs and lows of every swing and putt as the drama unfolds at Augusta.**

**Masters Drink Specials: Throughout the weekend of April 11-14, indulge in our special drink offerings crafted to enhance your viewing experience. Sip on our signature cocktails while cheering on your chosen players.**

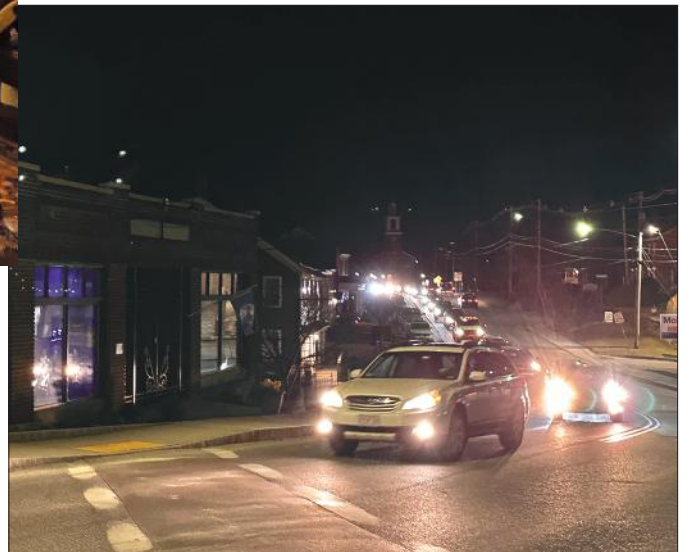
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# ECLIPSE WEEKEND FUN



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP left:** Josh Collier sings the American Songbook at the Brandon Inn, an eclipse exhibit at the Maclure Library in Pittsford, the eclipse mural painted by the Neshobe Student Council at the ConantSquareGallery, homebound traffic on Route 7 in Brandon hours after the eclipse on Monday night, the Yurtbags at Sister Wicked on Saturday night, the performers onstage at the Eclipse Cabaret at Town Hall on Saturday night.  
Photos by George Fjeld and Steven Jupiter



# IN BRANDON AND PITTSFORD



**EVEN THOUGH PITTSFORD** lay just outside the zone of totality, local residents flocked to the Pittsford Village Farm to watch the celestial magic unfold. The Farm hosted activities for kids as well.

# Gardening Corner

(Continued from Page 3)  
are finally mature. She told me that her biggest success was realizing and acting upon the need to expand her flower farm. She said her greatest joy in raising flowers is, “the world needs beauty and it’s very satisfying to bring that to people. Flowers make people happy.”

Renaissance Farm, 1403 Arnold District Road, Brandon. Renaissancefarmvermont@gmail.com, or call Shane at (401)741-7576.

## STEVENS FARMSTEAD

Jane Costello owns and runs her farm, Stevens Farmstead, on Williams Lane, just over Miller Hill in Sudbury, where the Champlain Valley stretches out to the sunset. Jane is focused on building her dinner-and-dessert delivery business in 2024. If you sign up for her 12-week service, she brings it to your door. Every week she has new menu options and Jane can even customize dinners to an ex-

tent, if you ask nicely. The second thing she is preparing, right now, is her summer CSA.

“I’ve got my vegetables started in my house (tomatoes, sweet peppers, melons, and flowers). I’ll move them into the greenhouse or outdoors in a few months. The rest will be directly sown into my fields. So, in the summertime, people can get their meals for 2, dessert, and a bag of vegetables from my farm. My summer CSA starts the last week of June and I’m signing people up now, and it’ll be delivered to your door. I will also sell dinners, desserts and the bag of veggies separately.”

Jane’s goal is to have 40 to 60 new customers within the communities she serves. She’s adding Lake Dunmore this year in addition to Brandon, Sudbury, Salisbury, Middlebury, Weybridge, and Cornwall. You can find Jane selling cupcakes and other baked goods at the Middlebury, Brandon,



ABOVE: MORE OFFERINGS from Jane Costello at the Stevens Farmstead. Below: Unique tulips from Renaissance Farm and the massive greenhouse in which they’re grown.

## INDEPENDENT DIGITAL marketing

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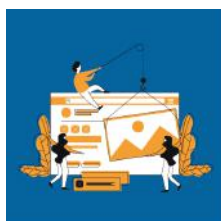
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work that I love. I’m a one-woman business and so yes, the marketing is challenging. I have started catering a few things for the American Legion in Middlebury and I would like to cater events in Brandon, including their American Legion, so you can contact me at [thestevensfarmstead.com](http://thestevensfarmstead.com). Don’t forget the “the,”” Jane reminds.



and Rutland farmers markets, and she’s still cooking meals for The Giving Fridge in Middlebury. So clearly Jane hasn’t got a lot of extra time on her hands.

Jane says her biggest challenges for 2024 are finding the time to build her farm’s social media presence and getting better known. “I love farming, cooking, and meeting my customers. It’s very satisfying. It makes me happy. I’m not complaining but when you add the marketing component, using all the new marketing tools that I certainly did not grow up with, it’s hard and a lot of work, on top of the



# Legislative Report

BY STEPHANIE JEROME

## End of session is getting busy

Wow! Brandon did it again! What an amazing Eclipse Weekend for our little town. Thank you to all that planned and participated in each activity. It was a blast.

### VERMONT AIR NATIONAL GUARD:

I had the privilege to be invited to tour the VT Air National Guard base in South Burlington this weekend. We toured the state-of-the-art fire station, F35 fighter jet hanger, received an intelligence briefing, and had lunch with the reservists. Prior to the visit, I knew very little about the VTANG and the full- and part-time personnel who staff this base. I came away with an incredible sense of pride in what they do for Vermont and for our nation. There is so much opportunity when one becomes a VT Air National Guard member, and the pay, education, insurance, retirement, and professional development benefits are astounding! If you know of any person who may be interested in becoming a part-time Air National Guard member, please check out <https://www.158fw.ang.af.mil/>.

### LEGISLATION:

Over the past two weeks, we have spent long hours getting bills passed so that they can be worked on by the Senate. Many bills started in the House will look radically different by the time they are voted out of the Senate; some will go on to a conference committee before they move on to the Governor for signature. Here is a link to the bills that have passed in the House and have moved on to the Senate: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/passed/2024#house>

Throughout the year, I hold constituent meetings. One conversation which I had last year, still stays with me. This couple, who told me that they typically vote Republican, expressed concerns that their adult children will not ever be able to afford a home or childcare. I want my constituents to know that we are working to solve these problems. Here are a few bills that address the issues of affordable housing and childcare.

H.829 creates a long-term housing vision and creates a roadmap for strategic housing investment. The legislature has invested significant federal and state dollars over the past sev-

eral years to help keep Vermonters sheltered, and to build and create more affordable housing. We need to continue that investment, in a sustained way, with consistent funding. This bill will help our community partners:

- Invest in our existing housing stock, especially in rural communities
- Help low-income Vermonters to find or stay in their homes
- Provide more opportunities for homeownership to low- and middle-income Vermonters
- Stabilize manufactured home communities
- Support housing and shelter capacity for the most vulnerable Vermonters

H.875 is the FY25 budget bill. This bill presents a balanced budget that funds infrastructure and services that support Vermonters, families, businesses, state government, and communities. The budget reflects essential investments in housing, workforce, economic development, human services, and the environment. It supports increased reimbursement rates for skilled nursing, supports food security, restores critical funding for the Child Care, supports more positions in the Judiciary, funds pension obligations, invests in housing, allocates funds for flood recovery, and more. These are lasting investments that support Vermonters now and into the future.

### EDUCATION/PROPERTY TAXES:

The issue of increased property taxes has been a huge concern in the legislature. Growth in education spending is being driven by:

School construction needs – there has been no aid for construction since 2007 and the deferred maintenance needs are dire.

Post pandemic student needs – pandemic-era federal spending has ended, but student needs remain. This includes students who are hungry, unhoused, dysregulated, chronically absent, anxious, addicted to social media, or cannot learn.

Collective bargaining salary agreements

Teacher health insurance costs have risen by 16%.

Inflationary pressures – i.e. cost of heating fuels, transportation, and supplies.

Implementation of Act 127 -

known as the Pupil Weighting Bill.

Common Level of Appraisal increase - related to the strong real estate market and increase in home values.

The legislature is looking at all options on how to modernize education funding formula and our educational system in order to reduce the tax burden. There will be a task force composed of experts in the field to examine the large structural issues regarding our current education system, with fewer students and too many buildings. We are committed to an equitable, high-quality education for Vermont students. This is a crisis.

### CONSTITUENT OUT-REACH:

Constituent Coffee Hour on Saturday 4/13 at 10am in the Brandon Free Public Library conference room.

Please continue to reach out to me as I value your opinions at [sjerome@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:sjerome@leg.state.vt.us)

*Take care,  
Stephanie*

*Rep. Stephanie Zak Jerome  
(Brandon)*

*Commerce and Economic  
Development Committee  
(Vice-chair)*

# Bridal Show

(Continued from Page 4)

tificate from Big Day Paintings by Ashley Hayunga, \$250 Wedding Services Certificate from Over-time Events and more!

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REGISTRATION and TICKETS at [Middleburybridalshow.com](http://Middleburybridalshow.com) With 4 paid tickets, Brides ticket is FREE!

National Marrow Donor Program

Everyday approximately 6000 patients who need life-saving

Marrow are searching for a Donor Match. The Vermont Wedding Association is celebrating 15 years partnering with Kerry Ellis and the National Marrow Donor Program at Rutland Regional Medical Center donating a table at each of our bridal shows to welcome couples and their families to find a match. We are pleased to share that we have found a match at 5 of our shows and some have gone on to become donors! We are very grateful and so pleased to be part of making that connection to save a life

**Mim's Photos** are on page 24!  
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# Brandon SB

(Continued from Page 1)

Doug Bailey absent because of an injury, the four board members in attendance deadlocked: Heather Nelson and Tim Guiles voted for the revision and Brian Coolidge and Ralph Ethier voted against it.

On Monday, with all members now in attendance, the board voted to adopt the revised proposal. All members but Mr. Coolidge voted in favor.

Mr. Coolidge had proposed additional cuts: eliminating the Deputy Town Manager position, not expanding the Zoning Administrator's hours, and forgoing the GOgov subscription software that the town uses to track its operations. None of these proposals was adopted. The motion to eliminate the Deputy Town Manager position was not even seconded for discussion.

Though the revision was strongly supported by some in the room, it also met with vocal opposition from several attendees, who expressed frustration that the cuts were not deeper and that the board was not listening to the concerns of the people it represents. Several citizen advisors to the Budget Committee stated that they had felt shut out of the budget process.

In response, Mr. Guiles stated that the board had an obligation to all the citizens of Brandon and not only to those who attend Selectboard meetings, a stance which prompted additional admonishment from attendees, some of whom called Mr. Guiles's comments "disrespectful."

The total proposed budget now stands at \$3,554,180, a

decrease of \$241,000. The amount to be raised by taxes is now \$3,030,210, which represents an increase of 10.8% over the current year.

A main cause of the increase in needed tax revenue in FY2025 was the decision the board took last year to use money from the town's reserve fund to offset some expenses in the current year's budget. Because a large portion of the current year's budget was paid for with non-tax revenues, a move that will not be repeated in FY2025's budget, the town needs to raise more taxes for FY2025 than it did for FY2024. This increase in needed tax-revenues would have occurred even if proposed spending for FY2025 matched the levels for FY2024.

The revised proposal will now come before Brandon voters on April 30.

## OTHER BUSINESS

The board also agreed to interview Karen Farwell for an appointment to the Brandon Historic Preservation Commission. Ms. Farwell would be filling a long-standing vacancy. Another seat on the Commission has recently been vacated by Jeff Stewart and will need to be filled.

Similarly, the board agreed

to interview Benjamin Wimett to fill a vacancy on the Brandon Diversity Committee. Deputy Town Manager Bill Moore spoke in support of Mr. Wimett's application, noting that Mr. Wimett had already been helping the Committee in its work.

Both Ms. Farwell's and Mr. Wimett's applications can be found in the Selectboard packet for 4/8/24 on the town website.

The board certified that the town was in compliance with state requirements that an inventory be kept of its roadways, bridges, and

other infrastructure.

The board adopted the annual update to the town's Local Emergency Management Plan. The full text of the plan can be found in the Selectboard packet for 4/8/24. Town Manager Seth Hopkins expressed some concern that in an emergency with extensive power outages, cell-phone and radio communication between emergency coordinators and residents might be difficult and alternative means of communication were being explored.

The board approved a mutual-aid agreement through the Rutland Regional Planning Commission that allows participating towns to borrow equipment from one another. The full text of the agreement is in the Selectboard packet for 4/8/24.

The board designated Sbardella Slate of Fair Haven as the "sole source vendor" for the Town Hall Roof. The deteriorating condition of the Town Hall's slate roof has been the subject of ongoing concern. ARPA funds have been set aside to cover most of the cost

*Mr. Coolidge had proposed additional cuts: eliminating the Deputy Town Manager position, not expanding the Zoning Administrator's hours, and forgoing the GOgov subscription software that the town uses to track its operations. None of these proposals was adopted.*

of a new slate roof. Several attendees asked whether slate was the most economical material in the long term, given its need for annual maintenance. Mr. Hopkins noted that a slate roof can last up to 150 years, which is more or less the age of the Town Hall's roof, while other materials, such as standing seam, have a much shorter

lifespan.

The board approved an updated payroll authorization to take into account the hiring of a new employee in the Highway Department and the resignation of a part-time police officer.

The board approved a warrant in the amount of \$698,910.71 to cover its expenses and obligations.

## Brandon Town Manager's report

### FOR THE AWARENESS OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE

Emergency Management for the Eclipse: The Town of Brandon desires to keep visitors using GPS off roads that are likely to be muddy, and to facilitate the safe flushing of southbound traffic on US Route 7 on Monday evening. On MONDAY, APRIL 8th:

1. Carver Street will be fully closed south of the railroad track to the Pittsford town line as it is likely to be muddy. Pittsford plans to close Syndicate Road on their end.
2. Long Swamp Road will be posted closed as if for high water, but residents may travel to and from their homes as usual.
3. Stone Mill Dam may be posted closed if conditions warrant, but residents may travel to and from their homes as usual.
4. High Pond Road and Birch Hill Road will remain open for travel. Paved roads will remain open for travel.
5. Traffic signals in the center of Town will be set to caution / flashing, and Brandon Police officers will direct traffic to move southbound US Route 7 as efficiently as safely possible.

Eclipse preparedness suggestions: <https://www.townofbrandon.com/eclipse-preparedness/>

### FOLLOW-UP ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Town has received insurance settlements for the single-globe lamppost, the triple-globe lamppost, and the collision with the cruiser. The River Street wastewater main failure at #8 and the wastewater line damage at the police station are both still pending.

(Writing Friday) Winston Forbes began his tenure with the Town on Monday morning as a member of the Town Highway Department. Welcome, Winston!

The Town is considering becoming an off-taker of solar credits produced by a privately-constructed array under consideration at the Brandon Industrial Park. I will keep the board apprised of developments in this matter which has required and received my attention and time.

I have had confirmation in writing from VTrans regarding Class 2 paving questions: First, that the FY25 Class 2 paving grant program has not yet been funded and applications will be sent to the Towns when it is open again; second, that all FY24 paving funds have been expended.

Bill Moore has resubmitted the Town's application for a VTrans structures grant for McConnell Road culvert, and the application has been confirmed as received in good order.

### FOCUS AREAS DURING REPORTING PERIOD

I completed the annual update to the local emergency management plan. I participated in-person at the quarterly meeting of the Rutland Regional emergency directors.

I attended the annual celebration of the Brandon Area Rescue Squad as their guest. The Town is privileged to have such a dedicated group of volunteers willing to expend their own valuable time to complete required training and whose

(See Town Manager report, Page 13)

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# Town Manager report

(Continued from Page 12) response to emergencies very often can mean the difference between life and death. Such selflessness is rare and deserves our gratitude.

I worked with the Town crew regarding the municipal roads general permit renewal and with Town staff to ensure

our financial obligation for this is met. The Town's planned 2023 work to improve storm-water management in several identified segments was postponed to the 2024 work season due to flood response (Newton, Wagner, Birch Hill, Kennedy Park) this past summer, with

the authorization of the Agency of Transportation and our regional planners who assisted the Town with the grants-in-aid program this season.

FEMA affirms all four of our projects with them are under FEMA review with no additional information due from

the Town at this time.

I worked with the DBA to advance the Bankers' Alley project.

I had many meetings with town officers, staff, and townspeople and responded to many requests for information from various parties. It is always very welcome to have an opportunity to address a citizen concern or answer a question at a time when I have resources available to do that.

### FOR AWARENESS OF THE SELECTBOARD

The Chief of Police received the resignation of Ana Burtch-MacLeod as a special police officer. We are grateful to Ana for her service to law enforcement in Brandon.

I received the resignation of Jeff Stewart from the Historic Preservation Commission. The

Town thanks Jeff for significant contributions to this board over many years and extends every good wish for the future.

Both of these public servants remain valued community members.

The Town crew has been keeping Brandon roads safe through several late-season snowstorms recently. We all appreciate their efforts, their dedication, and their professional skills in challenging working conditions. The Town appreciates the patience and safe driving of all concerned.

### TOWN MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA:

I recommend approval / adoption of all warned items presented tonight.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Seth Hopkins*

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT	
Operating Expenses	82% thru funds / 79% thru year
Unrestricted / Unassigned Fund Balance	\$718,865
1% (Local Option) Tax Fund Available / Undesignated	\$249,025
Known Grant Matches Not Yet Designated	UNION STREET
Delinquent property taxes (prior years)	\$333,530 (was \$334,403)
Delinquent wastewater (prior years [over 120 days])	\$185,413 (was \$188,866)
Number of <u>payment</u> plans for delinquent accounts	23 <u>active</u>

# Shannon Bryant

(Continued from Page 2)

from Brown University, working at Hamilton College in New York for six years and Williams College in Massachusetts for three.

Pottorf was based in Houston when they met, and Bryant relocated to be with her. It was in Texas that Bryant took her first steps toward a lifelong dream of building homes. As a teenager living in Brandon, she'd helped her parents convert a summer camp on Lake Hortonia into a full-year residence and the experience had always stuck with her. She decided to become a builder.

She found a mentor in Dan Phillips, who ran The Phoenix Commotion, a Texas-based construction company that specialized in homes built from recycled materials.

"His philosophy was to prevent materials from ending up in landfill," said Bryant.

She learned building from Phillips "from foundation to roof" and ultimately founded her own design-build company—Tend Building—in Houston. Tend designed and built one of the few certified "living buildings" in the world, meeting extremely high standards of sustainability and energy efficiency to obtain that designation.

Despite an established life in Houston, Bryant and Pottorf de-

ecided to move back to Vermont after Hurricane Harvey devastated Houston in 2017. They'd already been spending summers at Bryant's family home on Hortonia, and the realities of climate change were making life in Houston less and less attractive.

They devised a five-year plan to wind down their lives in Houston and transition back to Vermont, making the leap to full-year residency in 2019. They purchased the house on Hortonia from Bryant's family. Pottorf got a job with a progressive Vermont-based construction company called New Frameworks while Bryant took positions with the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury and the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County, where she is the director of the Energy Navigator Program.

It wasn't long before she started feeling a desire to bring her new neighbors together. Having heard stories about weekly dances on Lake Hortonia back in the day, she organized "Hootenanny Hortonia," summer concerts on the lake that folks can enjoy while on the water.

"We've had 6 of these concerts so far," said Bryant. "We'll continue them this summer. It brings the community together."

And that community spirit has now guided her onto the Sudbury Selectboard. One proj-

ect Bryant hopes to help steer to fruition is the winterization of the Town Meetinghouse, formerly the Sudbury Congregational Church on Route 30. Currently, the distinctive building is not used in the winter because

heating costs are unsustainable for the small town. Bryant's experience with energy efficiency will be handy in making the building suitable for full-year use.

Bryant sees her position as

giving a voice to her community and making sure the town is resilient for the future. She has returned to her roots, now with her wife and their terrier mix, Finny.

"This has always been home."

## Homebuyer *Advantage!*

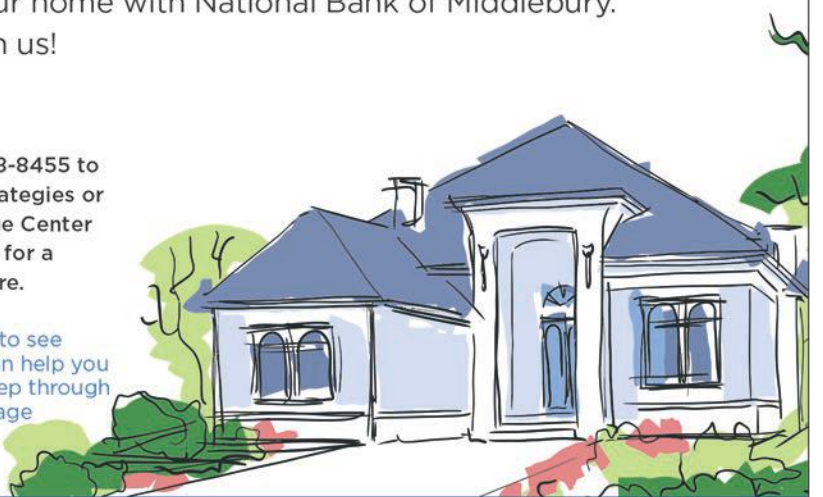
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# ARE ZOMBIES REAL? ABSOLUTELY... IN NATURE!

BY GARY MEFFE

People are fascinated by zombies. Countless movies (mostly bad) have been made about them, books expound on zombies, there are zombie-inspired songs, a zombie cocktail, and Brandon even had its very own zombie invasion last Sunday. Drove of our (mostly) normal friends and neighbors suddenly appeared as “undead” gnarly creatures, awkwardly and jerkily making their way down Park Street, threatening to turn the rest of us into their kind with a bite from their corpse-like jaws. How awful and gruesome. And how silly and absurd to think there really are zombies! Or...is it?

Nature invented many things long before humans came along. And there are, in fact, honest-to-goodness zombies all around us,

in many and varied forms. Don't believe me? Read on.

“Zombification” occurs when one organism—a parasite—manipulates the behavior of another organism—a host—to its own benefit. In mythical human zombies, that organism usually is a virus that re-animates corpses to go around biting living people to infect them and spread the virus, thereby keeping itself thriving. Those poor human zombies have no choice; they are mind-controlled by their viruses. Something very similar occurs throughout much of the animal kingdom, when parasites change the normal behavior of their hosts to improve their own chances of survival and reproduction. These parasites turn their hosts into “zombies,” forcing them into strange and unnatural behaviors,

and thus do the bidding for their uninvited guests. Let's look at a few examples.

There is a flatworm that inhabits salt marshes in southern California. It needs to find its way into fish-eating birds and has enlisted two other species to help it. Flatworm eggs appear in mudflats, where they are eaten by a snail. Eventually, swimming larvae of the worm emerge from the snail and infect the gills of killifish. These larvae then work their way to the brain and cause the killifish to behave erratically. The infected fish jerk, shimmy, flash (remind you of any Brandon zombies?), and thrash around at the surface, advertising their presence, where they are easy prey for fish-eating birds. The flatworms then mature in the guts of the birds, who

eventually poop out eggs to be eaten by snails, completing the life cycle. Snails and killifish are the worms' unwitting zombies.

Another flatworm has figured out another way to control and zombify another snail host. In this case, the land snail inadvertently eats eggs of the flatworm. These eggs hatch into larvae that travel to the eye stalks of the snail. Normally tiny, the eye stalks now swell to huge sizes and pulsate rhythmically. The

amounts to her own personal childcare facility.

The eggs develop into larvae inside the caterpillar, where they munch on bodily fluids of their host (Warning: the more squeamish among you may now wish to turn the page and move on to another article). As they feed on these goodies, they get bigger and the host swells right along with them. Curiously, the caterpillar doesn't seem to take notice, and continues feeding the



**A TYPICAL, PARASITIC Ichneumonid wasp, which zombifies caterpillars to raise its young. There are thousands of species of this type of wasp. Fortunately, none of them have any zombie power over humans.**

pulsing eyestalks look remarkably like caterpillars, attracting bird predators, who eat the eye stalks, whereupon the flatworm parasite takes up residence, matures, and...you guessed it...eggs are pooped out, completing the lifecycle. Zombie snails at your service. (You can see this in a video at <https://www.wired.com/2014/09/absurd-creature-of-the-week-disco-worm/>).

Let's now look at the insect world. Ichneumonid (ICK-NEW-MON-ID) wasps are famous in biological circles for their parasitic ways. They ingeniously manipulate the behavior of various hosts—turning them into zombies—in the pursuit of childcare. There are many variations on this theme, but I will demonstrate with a creature called Glyptapanteles (don't fret over these big words; biologists have a sadistic streak and also like to show off). When ready with eggs, a female Glyptapanteles (let's call her Glypta) finds a caterpillar and injects her eggs into the body cavity, up to 80 eggs on a good day. Our Glypta then flies off to resume her life away from what

whole time, unknowingly supporting her foreign brood with a continual flow of calories. Yum!

Now it gets really interesting (Second warning to the squeamish: look away now. I mean it!). When the larvae are big and ready to greet the world, they release a chemical that paralyzes their host, whereupon they burrow through the skin (I warned you!), up to 80 youngsters pretty much all at once, bursting out. Cool, huh? But wait, there's more!

These larvae time their emergence with a shedding of their exoskeletons, which plugs the holes they just made, thus keeping their adopted mama from bleeding out, because they are not, in fact, finished with their zombie caretaker.

A couple of the larvae mysteriously remain behind and release new and different chemicals that take over the brain and annoy the heck out of the caterpillar, who by now surely must realize something is amiss. The paralysis has worn off and next the zombie thrashes around uncontrollably. (See *Nature's zombies*, Page 22)

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Thank you to our suppliers, customers and our competitors for all they have done to help us in the last 47 years.

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Yes, 47 years have come and gone but not our heart. A heartfelt thanks to all the people we serve.

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# Red Clover celebrates the eclipse with local music and limited edition beer



**BLOODROOT GAP (ABOVE) and The Telesonics (left)** performed at Red Clover Ale Company in Brandon on Friday. The place was packed with locals and visitors alike, who all came to enjoy Red Clover's delicious brews and to hear a mix of originals and covers from great local bands.

Photos by George Fjeld



**THE BRANDON ARTISTS Guild** hosted an eclipse-themed show "In the Path of Shade," with an opening on Friday. The Guild is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Photo by George Fjeld

# ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

**LOCAL ZOMBIES TERRORIZED** Brandon on Sunday afternoon! They rose from their graves and danced their way down Park Street, accompanied by the Neshobe School band and the Pittsford Boo Mobile. Once they reached the Brandon Inn, the zombies broke into a credible choreo rendition of "Thriller" while a huge crowd cheered them on and enjoyed the spectacle. Save your old clothes, because the walk was such a hit it just may be repeated next year...





# ROSE COMES TO LIFE



Photos by Steven Jupiter, Dorothea Langevin, and Jean Somerset



## Let's Fly: A weekly series on tips and tricks for air travel

### What do liquor, laser pointing, & airplane engines have in common?

BY CONNIE M. NITE

Hello again my wonderful readers! I'm so glad you're back for another week of my tips and tricks to airline travel! I hope you've had a fantastic week! I wanted to start off this week with a little useless information for you before we get back to flying those "friendly skies!" Did you know how M&M candies were invented? During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), soldiers would carry a British candy called Smarties with them. Smarties were convenient because the soldiers could eat the candies and not take their fingers off the triggers of their weapons. So, enter Forrest Mars Sr., aka Mars Candy Company, who thought why not use chocolate? In 1941, the birth of the M&M was born in the patent office and that's how and why we have M&M candies! You all know how much the crews love candy especially chocolates! Now let's get back to the airlines and this week's jam-packed article where we talk about liquor, lasers, and airplane engines! Let's get started!

I think the airlines have a "cash cow" so to speak when it comes to selling you liquor. Did you know it's an FAA regulation that only crew members can serve alcohol on board the airplane and passengers can't drink their personal alcohol while on board. Why,

you ask? Well, it just takes a few bad apples to mess things up and this is another case of a few people messing things up! People used to bring their own alcohol on board, and they would get hootin' an hollerin' drunk. Not just drunk but super drunk. So drunk, in fact, they would pass out, vomit on rows of passengers, and monopolize the lavatory. It was not fun!

I remember years ago, I had a passenger who was so drunk, I tried to get her to drink some water and take a break from drinking. She grabbed my arm so hard that she left me with five bleeding nail marks. Let's just say at the end of the flight she had some explaining to do when law enforcement officers met our flight! It hurt, by the way! So, that's why the crew serves all the alcohol on all flights! We also monitor how much we sell you because the altitude can affect people differently and often times people get intoxicated quicker in the air at thirty-five thousand feet. So, we have to make sure you're not so inebriated that

you can't make your way off the airplane!

I will say, save yourself some money, and bring your own mini bottles of liquor or mini bottles of wine for when you get to your hotel room or your final destination. It's at least \$10 for a mini bottle of liquor on the airplane and the cost can add up quickly! Go to a liquor store buy yourself some small bottles of liquor for a fraction of the price it would cost you to buy on board. It's even better if you ask the flight attendants for a few unopened cans of your choice of beverage to go with your alcoholic drink. Then when you get to your final destination, relax with your rum and coke that didn't cost you a fortune to buy on board!

Next up, let's talk about laser pointing and this current rising trend of stupidity going around that's just... well, stupid! Most airline pilots are great at keeping us safe and handling any situation which comes their way. It's extremely hard to handle an aircraft emergency or land safely if you're temporarily blinded by a laser flashing in your eyes! Last year, the FAA received 13,304 reports from pilots who were laser pointed at! I just don't get it! It's so dangerous and unsafe and just plain reckless! Why would you want to cause the death of 200 people because you want to make a TikTok video? I know you would never do anything like this, my fabulous readers, but just spread the word to others! The reason I brought the laser topic up is because normally you'll start to see this kind of behavior in the spring and start of summer. If I can help inform you to inform others that laser pointing and airplanes don't mix, maybe we can stop at least one laser pointing attack on an airplane and make a difference!

Lastly, let's talk about airplane engines! Most people don't know this, but Boeing and Airbus don't make the engines on their airplanes. A lot of the "parts" of the airplanes they put together are manufactured by other companies. Airbus and Boeing contract these individual companies to make these different parts so they can "build" the airplane! When it comes to airplane engines, the market is cornered by three different companies, General Electric, Pratt & Whitney, and Rolls-Royce! Yup, GE and Rolls-Royce! Just think about it! You may have a GE washer or dryer in your house right

now, and they're the same company that makes some of the largest airplane engines in the world! Kind of cool! We've all heard of Rolls-Royce and most of us won't have one of those cars parked in our driveways, since one of the cheapest models will run you \$328,850, and if you do have one, good for you! My driveway, like most of yours, doesn't sport a Rolls-Royce! Lastly, we have Pratt & Whitney, and although they've been around since 1860, most people don't even know who they are because they run more exclusive to the airline industry. So, next time you're on a flight, regardless of the airline you fly, check out the airline magazine in your seatback pocket and find the page where it talks about the airline fleet. Find your airplane and see who makes the engines!

Ok everyone, that's all we have time for today! Next week, I'm not sure what I'm going to talk about, but you can guarantee it'll be some more interesting and entertaining tips and tricks to airline travel! I hope you all have a wonderful week whether you fly those "friendly skies" or just hang out at home! See you all next week!

Oh! Don't forget to bring the crews chocolates... we love chocolates! Fly on!

*People used to bring their own alcohol on board, and they would get hootin' an hollerin' drunk. Not just drunk but super drunk. So drunk, in fact, they would pass out, vomit on rows of passengers, and monopolize the lavatory. It was not fun!*

# Introduction to Bullhead Fishing clinics come to VT

MONTPELIER, Vt. — The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is holding a series of introductory bullhead fishing clinics this spring, highlighting a seasonal opportunity to target one of Vermont's most overlooked fish species.

"The arrival of spring brings increased opportunities to catch bullhead as they begin moving into their spawning grounds," said Education Specialist Corey Hart. "In addition to being a blast to catch, bullhead -- or 'horned pout' as they are also known -- are excellent table fare."

Each clinic will explore different fishing styles used to target brown bullhead, which are found in many of the shallower, muddier lakes, ponds and rivers of Vermont. Bullhead, like other species in the catfish family, are nocturnal bottom feeders. So, the clinics will take place in the evening to take advantage of increased bullhead activity.

These clinics are open to people of all ages and levels of experience, including those who are completely new to fishing. Equipment will be provided, but participants are encouraged to bring their own rods as well. Par-

ticipants should also dress for the weather and bring a flashlight or headlamp.

Space is limited to the first 30 registrants and seminars fill up quickly, so sign up as early as possible. Pre-registration is required and can be completed in the events calendar on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website at vt-fishandwildlife.com.

Directions to the meeting spot will be given upon registering.

Dates & Locations:

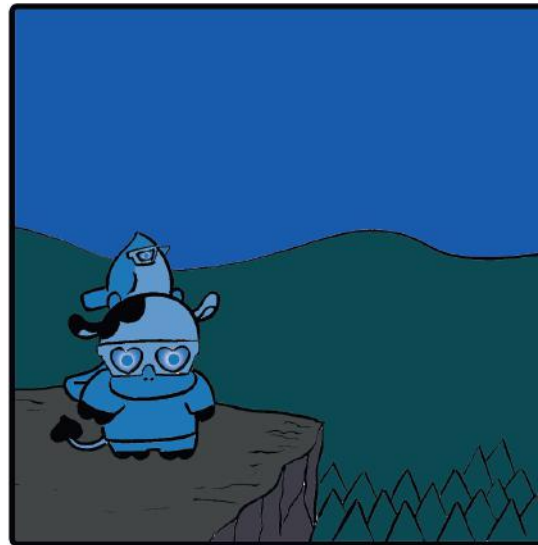
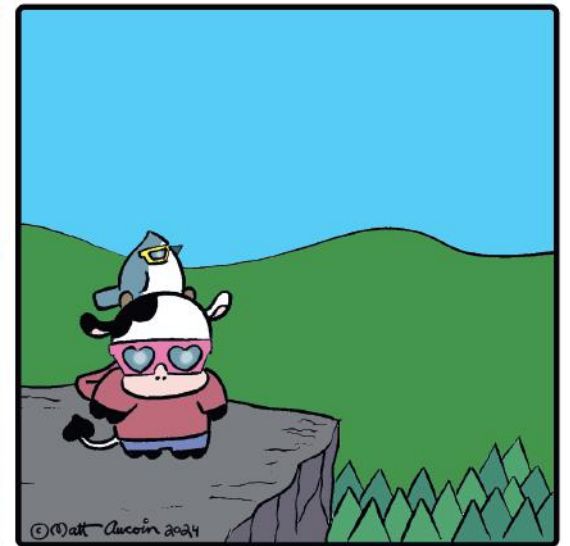
Friday, April 26, Stonebridge Dam, Panton, VT: Start time 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 2, Macs Bend, Swanton, VT: Start time 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 15, Hoyts landing, Springfield, VT: Start time: 6:30 p.m.

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Please include a description of the accommodation you will need. Individuals making such requests must include their contact information. Please send an e-mail to corey.hart@vermont.gov or call 802-505-5562 (voice), 1-800-253-0191 (TTY).

## MAPLE<sup>the</sup> COW<sup>TM</sup> by Matt Aucoin



## Successful collection for the Brandon Food Shelf

THE BRANDON FOREST Dale Lions Club collected over 300 food items on March 30th to give to the local Food Shelf at the Brandon Methodist Church. Pictured right to left: Lion Sandy Brutkoski delivered food to Jan Galusha and Patrick Snow at the Brandon Food Shelf. Thanks for the generosity of community members who donated food.

# Calendar of events

## April

### Mondays

#### Brandon Rec offers Aikido classes

Come to Brandon Town Hall for Youth classes at 5 p.m., and adult classes at 6 p.m. Beginners and spectators welcome. Visit [www.aikidovermont.org](http://www.aikidovermont.org) for more information, including fees.

### Tuesdays

#### Maclure Library Story Time Playgroup

Looking for a fun, educational playgroup for your 2–5 year old? Look no further! From 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. join Miss Allie, a certified teacher, for a weekly FREE literacy-based playgroup. Light snacks will be provided, along with stories, crafts, songs, games, and more. To register, please email [allie.griffiths@rcpcc.org](mailto:allie.griffiths@rcpcc.org) with your child's name, age, and contact information for your family.

#### Friends Zone

The Friends Zone will be initially open 3 hours per week at the Brandon United Methodist Church on Tuesdays from 12-3 p.m. at 1 Franklin Street, Brandon. Socialize with old friends, make new ones. Sip some soup while you sip a drink. Be puzzled for a bit, sorting out a puzzle, or hold an Ace in the hole until the right moment to play it. If so inclined, you can bring to the table a struggle of your own to work on or your thoughts on developing the Friends Zone or improving our lives.

The door is open. Our minds are open. Our hearts are open.

All are welcome in.

For more information contact pastors Reverend John Hardman-Zimmerman ([hzm@hotmail.com](mailto:hzm@hotmail.com) or (802) 282-7532) or Vicki Disorda ([vqueenoftheearth@gmail.com](mailto:vqueenoftheearth@gmail.com) or (802) 345-4125).

#### Pins & Needles Craft Club at the Brandon Free Public Library

Drop in from 5:30–7:00 p.m., and bring your projects to work on.

### Wednesdays

#### Ping Pong

The Green Mountain Table Tennis Club would like to announce the beginning of its new season!

The club has begun playing on Wednesday evenings starting at 7 p.m. It will meet nearly every Wednesday year-round in the gym at the Rutland Area Christian School in Rutland, located at the corner of Melrose Ave. and Lincoln Ave. in Rutland, a block from the intersection of Route 7 and Melrose Ave. (110 Lincoln Ave., Rutland, VT 05701).

Being a part of this unique and exciting club offers a variety of activities, including regular practice, a challenge board, clinics for beginner and advanced play, singles and doubles, inter-club events with other table tennis clubs, and even tournaments.

If you are interested in table tennis as a recreational or athletic activity, we're interested in you! There is a mod-

est membership fee of only \$30, although you can come twice free as our guest. Bring your sneakers and paddle (or use ours) and have some fun playing a great game of "Pong!"

For further information about the Green Mountain Table Tennis Club, visit our club's website at [www.gmttc.com](http://www.gmttc.com).

#### Yoga Prana Shakti Zoom & Studio Chair Yoga, Gentle, Wednesdays

From 10:30–11:30 a.m. at 155 Woodstock Avenue in Rutland, Lina Cloffe Hanson (Parvati) offers an Earth Conscientious, Spiritual, Gentle Physical Yoga Practice. We meet on Mondays via zoom. Contact for Zoom link. (There is also a Monday Zoom only class)

Not everyone can get up and down off of the floor easily, making traditional yoga classes difficult. If you have physical limitation or a health issue this might be the ideal class for you. With the help of a chair most people can practice yoga and reap the benefits of increased circulation, balance, flexibility, mobility, strength and more.

We spend a fair amount of the time exercising in a seated position in the chairs but if possible, we also do exercises standing, using the chairs for support. The exercises can be adjusted for individual needs and we move at a comfortable pace. I think you will soon notice a difference once you start. Looking forward to seeing you in class!

Lina (Parvati) has 20 plus years of experience teaching and a lifelong personal practice.

To stay tuned if there are any cancellations, follow on Facebook and get on our email list. \$15/class

### Thursdays

#### Ukulele Group

Free at the Chaffee Art Center from 12–1 p.m., for adults & 12+. This is not a class but a group enjoying playing the ukulele together. Must pre-register. There are a limited amount of in-house instruments to reserve.

Attendees will be led through specific sheet music by musician Steven Wilson. All levels are welcome.

#### Open Mic at Red Clover in Brandon

Join us starting at 6 p.m. for a rousing good time!

### Fridays

#### Chaffee Art Center All About the Arts Free Class for kids 3–5

From 11am–Noon...FREE! Students will have fun creating and doing activities with art, music, literature, and more!

One free book per student will be given weekly (while supplies last) thanks to our partners at Rutland Free Library. Adult must accompany children under age 4. Must pre-register by Wednesday each week.

Instructor: Lori Sullivan;  
Minimum 3.

#### Maclure Library Knitting Circle

Come join us weekly to share projects from noon – 2:00 p.m.

#### Corn Hole at the Godnick Adult Center

By request, we will have drop-in cornhole in the Rec Hall on Fridays from 2–4 p.m.

Play with whomever shows up each time or just practice your cornhole skills!

### Saturdays

#### Bingo at the Brandon Senior Center

First Saturday of each month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring lunch, and the Center will provide beverages, desserts, and a good time. A great way to pass a Saturday afternoon. Please direct any questions to Kathy Mathis at 247-3121.

## Stone Valley Arts at Fox Hill—summer film screenings begin

#### Friday May 3rd at 7pm: *Past Lives* (2023)

Two childhood sweethearts are reunited for one weekend in New York after decades apart. A modern romance from debut filmmaker Celine Song and nominated for five Golden Globe Awards.

#### Friday June 21 at 7pm: *Showing Up* (2023)

A sculptor preparing to open a new show tried to work among the daily dramas of family and friends. Starring Michelle Williams and directed by Kelly Reichardt. A captivatingly funny portrait of art and craft.

#### Friday July 19th at 7pm: *You Hurt My Feelings* (2023)

A novelist's marriage is threatened when she overhears her husband's honest criticism of her new book. A comedy-drama starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus and directed by Nicole Holofcener.

\*All Films are supported by Kanopy in partnership with Castleton Free Library.

#### Storytime at the Brandon Free Public Library

Join us every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. for picture book storytime. All ages welcome.

### Sundays

#### Brandon Town Hall Painting with Crystal

Crystal Ketcham leads an all ages painting event!

Yes, you CAN paint! More info, contact Crystal at [ceastman88@gmail.com](mailto:ceastman88@gmail.com)

"The study of art is the most important study a garden designer can pursue."

### Wednesday 10th

#### River Mountain Valley Boys in concert featuring blues, country, folk and rock at Wallingford Town Hall

The River Mountain Valley Boys are a local band whose members live within an hour's drive of Wallingford. The band features Sumio Seo on fiddle, guitar and vocals; Jim Stannard on vocals and guitar; Rob Jeffreys on bass and vocals; Bob Munoz on guitar, harmonica and vocals; Chuck Davidson on electric guitar; and Brad Tyler on drums. The band plays both original and covered songs rooted in blues, country, folk, and rock traditions.

At the Wallingford Town Hall at 7 p.m.

Suggested donations of \$15 per person at the door.



**NXT Rockumentary Film Series: Fela Kuti: Music Is the Weapon (1982)**

Fela Kuti is to African music what Bob Marley is to reggae: its prophet. All contemporary forms of Black music, from funk to electronic, owe something to the irresistible groove of the Afrobeat sound that he created. Shot in Lagos at the peak of his career in 1982, this documentary contains interviews with Fela detailing his thoughts on politics, Pan-Africanism, music and religion, alongside unpublished versions of songs like ITT, Army Arrangement and Power Show.

From 7–8 pm at Next Stage Arts Project, 15 Kimball Hill, Putney. \$10.

Co-presented with Next Chapter Records.

**Thursday 11th**

**South American Wine Tasting Dinner at The Foundry at Summit Pond**

Join the Greater Killington Women’s Club for their 4th GKWC Wine Dinner Fundraiser featuring wines from South America on the evening of Thursday, April 11, 2024 at The Foundry. Spouses, partners & friends are all welcome to attend!

The evening begins with Registration at 6 pm followed by the Dinner at 6:30 pm. The cost is \$125 per person (including tax & tip) and includes four courses plus fabulous wine pairings! A knowledgeable sommelier will describe the wine being served with each course:

- 1st: Salmon Ceviche (with Chic Cava)
- 2nd: Beet & Burrata Salad (with Liquid Geography Rose)
- 3rd: Ropa Vieja with yellow rice, red peppers, onions & sweet plantain (with Campo Viejo Reserva)
- 4th: Desert Empanada with guava & queso fresco (with Lolea Sangria)

Proceeds from this special fundraising event will support our Scholarship & Awards Program benefiting local high school students.

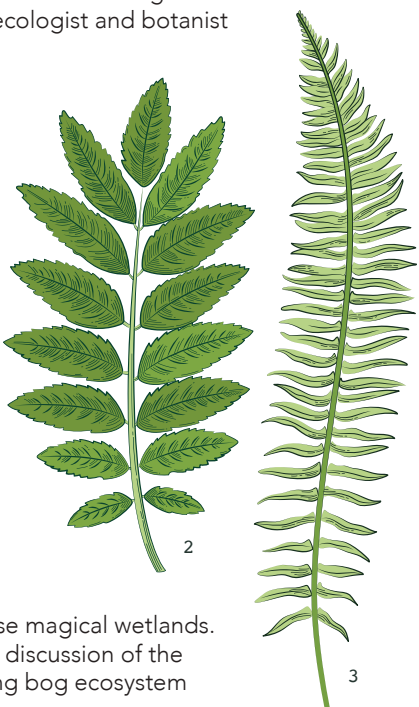
Space is limited. All tickets must be prepaid. Payments can be made via Paypal (to The Greater Killington Women’s Club) or mail your payment to the club’s P.O. Box #68, Killington VT 05751 (please add a note that it is for the wine dinner).

Like & share this event on our club Facebook page! Learn more & RSVP HERE: <https://www.gkwcvt.org/events>

**Friday 12th**

**Farm & Wilderness Conservation Speaker Series: Bogs and Fens—Virtual via Zoom**

For the third installment of our Speaker Series, Farm & Wilderness Conservation is delighted to host beloved ecologist and botanist Liz Thompson! Liz is a co-author of the well-known publication *Wetland, Woodland, Wildland* and has dedicated her career to conservation in Vermont and New England. For this presentation, Liz will focus on bogs and fens and highlight the significant ecological properties of these magical wetlands. There will also be discussion of the fascinating floating bog ecosystem



that calls Woodward Reservoir home. There will be time at the end for questions. We hope you will join us! 12–1 p.m.

**Stories Told in Tinmouth—a storytelling evening**

Please join us for an ongoing series of storytelling evenings at the Tinmouth Old Firehouse in beautiful downtown Tinmouth. The prompt is Hot Mess and/or Sugaring.

Sugaring Season may have passed us by, but there are always stories to tell! Or, have you ever been in a hot mess? What is a hot mess? Have you been a hot mess? Come share your story! Stories about Tinmouth are always welcome.

Come to share your true 5-minute story with a live audience of kind and supportive listeners, or come to listen and enjoy! Please join us for the fun and refreshments.

This event is based on our desire to connect with each other through shared experiences in stories and to keep the tradition of storytelling alive. It is based on the STORY SLAM model. Audience members put their name in a basket and storytellers are chosen randomly to tell their true story.

From 7–8:30 p.m. at the Old Firehouse (next to Town Office), 7 Mountain View Rd., Tinmouth. This is a free event sponsored by the Tinmouth Community Fund. All are welcome!

**Saturday 13th**

**Woodland Management Walk at Wolf Tree Forest—Brandon**

Join Vermont Coverts Co-operator Len Schmidt, Wolf Tree co-owner Jennie Master-son, and Rutland County Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff for a look at on-the-ground conservation practices implemented on Wolf Tree Forest. There have been close to a dozen NRCS cost-share practices implemented under both the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). As time permits, we can see and discuss a combination of past, in-progress, and planned projects including erosion control on logging trails, mast/crop tree releases, a patch cut for early successional regeneration, forest density reduction for wildlife, both mechanical and chemical control of invasive species, and brush piles for wildlife habitat. This is a great follow-up to the March 15 webinar on NRCS Cost Share Programs. Arrive any time after 9 am. We will work our way into the woods at 9:30. The walking is mostly on flat, well-maintained trails, but sturdy shoes and tick protection strongly recommended (see Tick workshop 3/20). Rain or shine, we’ll be back around 12 pm and the pizza oven will be going for those who wish to stay for a bite to eat after. Questions? E-mail Len at [woodwork@gmavt.net](mailto:woodwork@gmavt.net).

**Friday 19th**

**Sleep-Out to Support Homeless Veterans**



The public is invited to attend the opening ceremonies and hear talks by veterans with lived experience of homelessness, followed by a Q&A. The event is a fundraiser for the nonprofit Veterans’ Place.

Twenty intrepid volunteers will spend the night outside in makeshift shelters to stand in solidarity with homeless Veterans while raising awareness of Veteran homelessness in this country. The encampment kicks off at 5 pm and will feature a color guard with veteran Greg Bassette singing the Star Spangled Banner and other patriotic songs. The Veterans’ Place invites the public to participate in the opening ceremonies and hear talks by Veterans with lived experience of homelessness.

Keynote speaker and decorated Army combat veteran Morgana Isenberg of the NHARNG will talk from her own experience as one of the 40,000 veterans who are homeless in this country on any given night. “No one who fights for this country should have to fight for a job, a roof over their heads, or the care that they need when they come home,” says Isenberg.

An E4 Spc from Bravo Company 3643rd BSB out of Manchester, NH, Isenberg served in Kuwait and Iraq as Convoy Security during Operation Iraqi Freedom and in Operation New Dawn as Lead Gun truck 50 Cal Gunner and Driver. Her awards include the Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, Army Service Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with M Device, and Master’s Drivers Badge. She is currently a Veteran Outreach Program Specialist with the Vet Center operating out of White River Junction.

Other speakers include Skyler Koch, a former Infantry Squad Leader, SGT E5, with the United States Army and Executive Officer of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association 26-1, who currently serves in a peer support

**The Brandon Museum Artifact Roadshow  
April 25<sup>th</sup>, 6–8 p.m., Brandon Town Hall**

The Artifact Roadshow will give you a fascinating look into local history through the identification and dating of objects you bring to the event where archeologists will examine and discuss your artifacts.

The show will also provide a casual opportunity for mingling with others interested in historical objects.

No Artifacts? Come anyway to see what turns up!

Thanks to Professors Matthew and Ellen Moriarty and their students of the Vermont State University Archeology Program for their time and expertise to make this event possible.

The Brandon Museum offers events that bring history to life for our community! For more information contact [info@brandonmuseum.org](mailto:info@brandonmuseum.org)



role at The Veterans’ Place. Their talks will be followed by a Q&A session with the public.

The purpose of the Sleep-Out is to raise awareness of the problem of veteran homelessness in this country, and to support The Veterans’ Place, a nonprofit providing a home and support services for veterans while they work to reclaim the skills, wellness, confidence, resources, and motivation to live healthy, independent, and productive lives.

Admission is free; however, donations to support homeless veterans will be gratefully accepted.

Depot Square, Northfield VT.

# Nature's zombies

*(Continued from Page 14)*  
 Why, you might ask? Because those emerged Glypta larvae have spun cocoons and entered the pupal stage, where they are now vulnerable. The thrashing of the adopted mom helps to keep away predators from her adopted brood. And I won't even mention that she also spins a protective cocoon over everybody, because that would be too unbelievable. The pupae eventually mature and hatch into brand new, shiny adult Glyptas, who now go looking for their own childcare ser-

vice in another innocent caterpillar. Zombie makers on the loose! There are well over 25,000 known species of Ichneumonid wasps in the world, more than all known bird and mammal species combined! This argues strongly for the resounding success of this zombie-causing way of life (though to be clear, I'm not recommending it for any of you. You need to take care of your own kids). If you're still with me, I have one final zombie treat. And it is so unbelievable you'll think I'm

making it up. But I'm not, as I'm not nearly that creative. In fact, the scientists who study it cannot quite believe it, but here goes. In the jungles of South America lives a fungus called *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* (yeah, they're showing off again; let's just go with *Ophio*). Common name: the 'zombie fungus.' That should be a hint of what is to come. Let me emphasize, *Ophio* is a simple, non-descript blob of a fungus. Yet, it controls and manipulates ants in precise and exacting and unbelievable ways. Carpenter ants, specifically. *Ophio* infects a carpenter ant through a spore that attaches to the ant's exoskeleton and bores its way through using enzymes. It then establishes residency and begins to grow, feeding off the fluids that make up the ant's open circulatory system. The fungus expands, and within a couple of weeks constitutes about half of the ant's weight. Amazingly, the ant behaves normally the entire time, unnoticed by its colony mates, who would otherwise quickly escort it out of the colony and kill it. Yet, despite having this full-on fungal infection, the infected ants betray nothing of their intruders; all appears normal. After about three weeks, the fungus makes the ant do something extraordinary: it takes over the brain (here's the zombie part) whereupon the ant, right

around noon (I'm not kidding; it is timed for mid-day) leaves its hard-working colony of buddies, climbs up nearby vegetation to a leaf 10" above the ground (I'm still not kidding), locks its mandibles on the underside of a leaf, and dies. Ten inches appears to be the precise microclimate (temperature and humidity) best suited for the *Ophio* fungus to grow and prosper. Not nine inches, not eleven. Ten. Fungal hyphae (tentacles of fungi) now grow out of the mouth and around the dead ant to protect it from other fungi and bacteria. A long fungal stalk then emerges from behind the ant's head, where it releases spores to drop on and infect unaware carpenter ants working below, thus completing the life cycle. Another successful zombification!

time: there are fossils of this fungal fiasco from 48 million years ago. Pretty successful way of life, I'd say! As a scientist, I cannot take seriously the notion of human zombies and just have to laugh them off. But zombies in nature are no laughing matter, especially if you are the victim of one of the thousands of mind-controlling zombifiers lurking about! So, I'd advise against eating fish thrash-



**A ZOMBIFIED CARPENTER ant latched to the underside of a leaf, with an *Ophio* fungal stalk containing spores neatly emerging from its head.**

There are many *Ophio* species throughout South America and Asia, who each have their very own species of ant to zombify. And *Ophio* and its ilk have been at this business for quite a long

ing at the surface or munching on caterpillar-like structures pulsing from your escargot. And for heaven's sake, don't lounge around for hours looking like a caterpillar laying in the grass! As for the zombie fungus...I think we're pretty safe. At least here in Vermont.

## Restaurant guide

**Robert's**  
**Café Provence**

**From Provence to You**  
*De la Provence à Vous*

Wednesday – Saturday: 11:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.  
 Sunday: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Want a reservation? Please book through the website <https://cafeprovencet.com> or call (802) 247-9997

11 Center Street, Brandon, VT

**Franklin's**  
 FOOD, FRIENDS & FUN

Full Menu 7 days a week  
 Eat In or Take Out  
 Available for Parties

Prime Rib Every Friday & Saturday from 4–9 p.m.

**25 North Street, Proctor ☎ 802-459-3320**

Ad design included in pricing  
 Call 802 236-4662, or email [george@brandonreporter.com](mailto:george@brandonreporter.com) for more information

**Maiden Vermont celebrates the eclipse**  
 MAIDEN VERMONT PERFORMED at Brandon Town Hall on Sunday. Here the all-women a capella group is shown rehearsing with Musical Director Tim Guiles.

Photo by Mitchell Pearl

**SPREAD THE WORD!**  
 Have an event to add to our calendar?

EMAIL US AT [NEWS@BRANDONREPORTER.COM](mailto:NEWS@BRANDONREPORTER.COM)

# Can you guess the street?

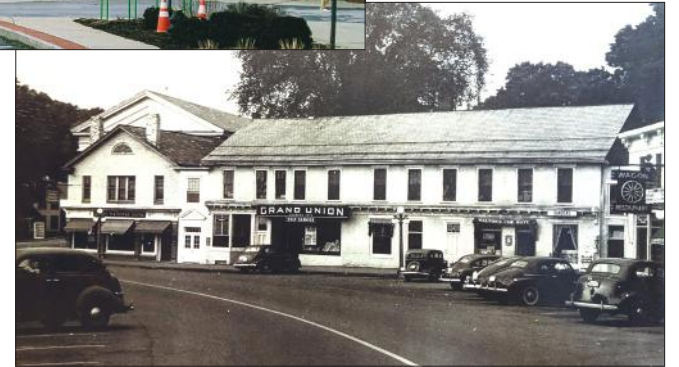
BY LAURA PETERSON

Last week's photo was of the Conant Block, which is now owned by Jim and Nancy Leary on Center Street in Brandon. On the left side of the photo is the Town Office, which was the First National Bank. On the right side of the photo is the barber shop. As you can see the Grand Union occupied part of this building and by this time (1950s?) it was a 'self serve' establishment. The Wheel Restaurant is self-explanatory, but does anyone know what sort of businesses Sanders, Welton's Cut Rate, and GAR were?

Congratulations to Robert Cappio for correctly identifying last week's location!



CONANT BLOCK NOW, and circa 1940.



Do you know what part of Brandon this is?

**NEW ENGLAND WOODCRAFT**  
A Focus on Sustainability  
Since 1961  
newenglandwoodcraft.com

## REAL ESTATE



**Brandon Village** home with surprising privacy and a country feel! Entry through the oversized and well-lit carport. The cozy living room has a pellet stove and plenty of natural light. The newer side porch looks out to the landscaped and terraced yard, enclosed by a wooden picket fence. Lots of room for pets, kids, and gardening! The finished basement has full sized windows, a 3/4 bathroom, a private entrance, and could be converted to a nice rental. A great combination of comfort and convenience. \$395,000



802-236-9112 • Wendy@RoweRealEstate.com  
RoweRealEstate.com



### Masonic generosity

PITTSFORD ASSISTANT TOWN Manager Ann Reed accepts \$1,000 from St Paul's Lodge of Masons in Brandon for purchase of police radios for the Town of Pittsford, presented by Rich Bowman of the Masons. The Masons raise money for their Community Fund to support people, programs, and projects in Brandon, Pittsford, and surrounding towns.



# Mim's Photos

Can you identify any of the people in these vintage photos from Mim Welton's Dateline Brandon newspaper archives? Let us know!

E-mail  
[kate@brandonreporter.com](mailto:kate@brandonreporter.com)  
if you can identify someone in these photos.

Or call us at 247-8080





# Crossword

## CLUES ACROSS

1. Island nation
7. Platforms
13. Project plan
14. French fishing port
16. South Dakota
17. Oakland's baseball team
19. Military policeman
20. Ornamental stone
22. Garland
23. Process that produces ammonia
25. Mousses
26. Music notation "dal \_\_\_"
28. Fail to win
29. Peyton's little brother
30. Not near
31. Some cars still need it
33. Lizard genus
34. An idiot (Brit.)
36. Postponed
38. African country
40. Gazes unpleasantly
41. In a way, traveled
43. Ukraine's capital
44. Appropriate
45. Dash
47. Twitch
48. Swiss river
51. Data file with computer animations
53. City in S. Korea
55. Particular region
56. They have eyes and noses
58. Tear
59. Large Madagascan lemur
60. Not out
61. Ornamental saddle covering
64. A driver's license is one
65. Latin term for charity
67. Rechristens
69. Objects from an earlier time
70. Hindu male religious teachers

## CLUES DOWN

1. Used as a weapon
2. Yukon Territory
3. Makes a map of
4. An established ceremony prescribed by a religion
5. Unnilhexium
6. Merchant
7. Playing the field
8. Folk singer DiFranco
9. Something to scratch
10. Mexican agave
11. Equal to one quintillion bytes
12. Session
13. North American people
15. Ranches
18. Electroencephalograph
21. A type of compound
24. Avenue
26. High schoolers' test
27. A type of meal
30. Gradually disappeared
32. Ancient Frankish law code
35. Popular pickup truck
37. Buzzing insect
38. Deal illegally
39. Lying in the same plane
42. Obstruct
43. Related
46. Challenge aggressively
47. Nocturnal hoofed animals
49. Bird's nests
50. Forays
52. \_\_\_ B. de Mille, filmmaker
54. Title of respect
55. One-time name of Vietnam
57. Self-immolation by fire ritual
59. Private school in New York
62. Political action committee
63. A way to fashion
66. Email reply
68. "The Great Lake State"

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12		
13								14						15	
16			17					18						19	
20		21				22				23		24			
25						26				27		28			
29				30					31		32		33		
		34	35						36		37				
38	39									40					
41						42				43					
44				45		46			47				48	49	50
51			52		53		54				55				
56					57		58				59				
60			61		62					63				64	
65		66							67				68		
	69								70						

# Sudoku

Here's how a sudoku puzzle works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku every row, every column and every box must contain the numbers 1 through 9. Each number must appear only once in each row, column and box. Figure out where to fill in the missing numbers by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers that are filled in, the easier it gets to solve.

1			6					3
					4			9
6					7			2
	8							
4	7	1		5	3			
3	5							1
		2						
8	3				1			6
		7					5	

Level: Intermediate

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

S	I	M	A	S	S	C	O	I	R	E	R	C	V	A	S
S	E	W	V	N	E	R	S	V	T	I	I	R	I	C	A
I	D	I	N	O	S	I	R	V	P	V	C	I	N	I	
I	R	O	N	I											
V	E	R	V	A	N	V	A	S	A	V	C	I	L	F	
H	V	A	V	C	I	T	I	H	V	A	D	I	F	V	
S	R	E	L	E	D	D	D	V	H	C					
D	L	E	B	L	E	T	A	V	A	T	P				
V	T	U	N	S	V	G	R	V	A	S	F	L	E	I	
E															
R	E	B	B	H	I	L	E	T	E	R	G	A	V	G	
P	M	P	S	C	S	L	T	H	V	A	S	D	O	S	
S															
S															

1	4	5	8	3	2	7	6	9	6
7	9	2	1	6	5	4	3	8	8
3	9	8	6	7	4	2	5	1	5
8	1	4	2	9	7	6	5	3	3
6	2	9	3	5	8	7	1	4	4
5	7	3	9	1	4	6	8	2	8
6	4	3	8	9	7	1	5	2	6
7	2	5	3	1	4	6	8	9	7
9	8	6	2	5	7	3	4	1	9

## April Showers Bring May Kittens!

Did you know that Rutland County Humane Society (RCHS) cares for at least 300 kittens each year? As it starts to get warmer, the kittens will be here before we know it! Please help RCHS take care of our many new kitten arrivals this season. During April, we are asking for donations to ensure we have the supplies we need for them! If you would like to shop online, you can check out our Amazon "Kitten Shower" wish list under "Ways to Give" at rchsvt.org, and your gifts will be shipped directly to RCHS. If you'd like to shop locally, you can also bring supplies to the shelter! Some of the items we need include KMR kitten formula, chicken or turkey baby food (Gerber brand), cat beds and toys, pate canned kitten food, small animal heating pads, fleece blankets, monetary donations, and/or gift cards. For more information, please call the RCHS office at 802.483.6700. Thank you for helping us take care of the kittens!

### I COULD BE THE NEW FRIEND YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!

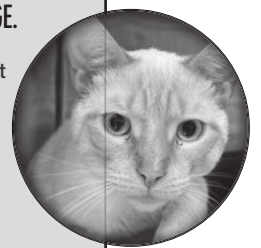


#### MEET LAVERNE - 9 MONTHS OLD. SPAYED FEMALE. BEAGLE MIX. BLACK.

Hi, my name is Laverne, and I am a rescue pup that has a heart of gold and a bark that will melt your heart! I love to chase my friends' tails and play with toys all day long. As all puppies, I am working on potty training and starting to get the hang of it! I came to the RCHS on March 15th from a busy shelter in Louisiana! I am excited to start my new beginning in Vermont with my forever family! If I sound like the puppy for you, please stop by to meet me! The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday 11am to 4pm. I will be waiting for you!

#### MEET SMEGLE - 1 YEAR OLD. NEUTERED MALE. DOMESTIC SHORT HAIR. WHITE/ORANGE.

SmeGLE is a unique looking boy! His face looks as if it has been painted by the brushstrokes of a whimsical artist. He is a masterpiece of feline beauty. He is like an abstract painting that has come to life. He never fails to spark up conversation wherever he goes. He is a very sweet boy who loves attention! He was surrendered to us with his friend Goose on March 26th. The previous owners had too many cats. Therefore, we do know he loves his feline friends! He especially likes his friend Goose! However, we have no known history on how he will do with children or dogs. He is the biggest lovebug who loves everyone and everything! If this cuddle bug sounds like the right fit for you, please stop by and visit with him. The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday 11am to 4pm.



## RUTLAND COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

802-483-6700 • WWW.RCHSVT.ORG  
765 STEVENS RD. • PITTSFORD



OUR ADOPTION CENTER IS OPEN  
TUESDAY-SATURDAY FROM  
11AM-4PM.  
NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

# OFF THE SHELF



## DID YOU KNOW?

We have a new part-time librarian! Stop in on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and some Saturdays to meet Dan.

### The following large print books were donated by Brenda Whittaker:

#### The Truth about the Devlins by Lisa Scottoline, donated in memory of Marion Philipse

TJ Devlin is the charming disappointment in the prominent Devlin family, all of whom are lawyers at their highly successful firm—except him. After a stint in prison and rehab for alcoholism, TJ can't get hired anywhere except at the firm, in a make-work job with the title of investigator. One night, TJ's world turns upside down after his older brother John confesses that he murdered one of their clients, an accountant he'd confronted with proof of embezzlement. It seems impossible. TJ plunges into the investigation, seizing the chance to prove his worth and save his brother. But in no time, TJ and John find themselves entangled in a lethal web of deception and murder. TJ will fight to save his family, but what he learns might break them first.

#### The Wild Side by Fern Michaels, donated in memory of Maureen Vogel

For Melanie Drake, a school guidance counselor in a small Virginia town, the day's challenges typically involve a playground scuffle or a student skipping school. It's worlds away from her previous career as a vital part of the Office of Special Investigations. When a call comes from her former supervisor, Melanie agrees to go undercover as an escort to

spy on a group of international billionaires who meet regularly for decadent dinners. Infiltrating those meetings could yield information vital to national security. But these men aren't just wealthy and powerful, they're also exceptionally ruthless. One slip, and they won't hesitate to eliminate Melanie, by any means necessary...

#### The Uncharted Flight of Olivia West by Sara Ackerman, donated in memory of Frances Brown-Close

1927. Olivia "Livy" West is a fearless young pilot who yearns to cross oceans and travel the skies. When she learns of the Dole Air Race—a high-stakes contest to be the first to make the 2,400-mile Pacific crossing from the West Coast to Hawai'i—she sets her sights on qualifying. But it soon becomes clear that only men will make the cut. In a last-ditch effort to take part, Livy manages to be picked as a navigator for one of the pilots, before setting out on a harrowing journey that some will not survive. 1987. Wren Summers is down to her last dime when she learns she has inherited a remote piece of land on the Big Island with nothing on it but a dilapidated barn and an overgrown macadamia nut grove. She plans on selling it and using the money to live on, but she is drawn in by the mysterious objects kept in the barn by her late great-uncle—clues to a tragic piece of aviation history. Determined to find out what really happened all those years ago, Wren enlists the help of residents at a nearby retirement home to uncover Olivia's story piece by piece. What she discovers is more

earth-shattering, and closer to home, than she could have ever imagined.

### New in DVDs.

#### Wednesday (Season One)

When Wednesday Addams is sent to Nevermore Academy, her sleuthing skills are put to the test when a monster goes on a killing spree, terrorizing the school and nearby town—all while navigating a too-cheerful roommate, her emerging psychic abilities, and a 25-year-old mystery involving her parents.

#### Freud's Last Session (Rated PG-13)

An imaginary meeting of Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis in late 1939, in which an ailing Freud asks Lewis to debate about the existence of God.

#### Immediate Family (NR)

This documentary follows the work and lives of legendary 1970s session musicians who were featured on some of the most iconic recordings of the era. Featuring Stevie Nicks, Phil Collins, Lyle Lovett, Carole King and more.

#### Cat Daddies (NR)

Man has found a new best friend in this heartwarming collective portrait of nine men whose lives have been proudly and forever changed by their love for cats.

# Brandon Police Report

## April 1

- Posted a property watch on Hollow Road.
- Received a complaint of people handing out pamphlets in the area of West Seminary Street.
- Completed a VIN verification.
- Received a request for VIN verification on Furnace Road for an abandoned vehicle on the property.
- Assisted the Brandon Animal Control Officer (ACO) with a vehicle lock-out at the scene of an animal incident on Grove Street.
- Took fingerprints for a nursing license.
- Took fingerprints for foster care.
- Responded to the area of Long Swamp Road for a report of a vehicle that had gone off the road and was stuck in the swamp. The vehicle was pulled onto the road by a tow truck. It had sustained minor to moderate damage to its front bumper, which was documented for insurance purposes.
- Took fingerprints for a teaching license.
- Responded to an alarm at Brandon Primary Care on Court Street. The responding officer determined that the alarm was false and there was no emergency.
- Assisted a motorist stopped on the shoulder of McConnell Road who was having a mental health issue. The officer spoke with the individual regarding the issue(s) he was going through, and the man left the area without incident.

## April 2

- Received a call from Brandon Community Health requesting a welfare check on one of their patients who suddenly cancelled all of their appointments and then wouldn't answer the phone. The responding officer located the individual at their residence and determined that the individual was okay.
- Conducted a background check on a volunteer for the BRAVO Program.
- Vehicle stop at the intersection of Center Street and Union Street for a stop sign violation. Warning issued.
- Took fingerprints for a volunteer.
- Documented an incident in which a dog got away from its handler and attacked another dog on Mulcahy Drive. An investigation will be conducted by the ACO.
- K-9 Unit was called to assist the Pittsford Police Department with a sniff on a vehicle that was seized and suspected of containing illegal drugs. K9 Guinness alerted to the presence of drugs in the vehicle.
- Received a Be On Lookout for a

vehicle being operated in a dangerous manner on Franklin Street. The vehicle was soon located by officers and stopped.

- Applied for a search warrant, which was approved, to take a wanted person into custody on Frasier Road.
- Received a call about an aggressive dog near the Brandon Inn on Park Street. The area was checked, but the dog was not located. ACO was advised about the incident.
- Responded to a residence on Grove Street regarding a teenage girl whose family found marijuana paraphernalia in her possession. The officer spoke with the complainant and it was agreed that the matter would be handled by the family.
- Conducted a search warrant on Frasier Road for a wanted individual who was inside. The individual was taken into custody without incident and transported to the Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility in Rutland City for lodging.

## April 3

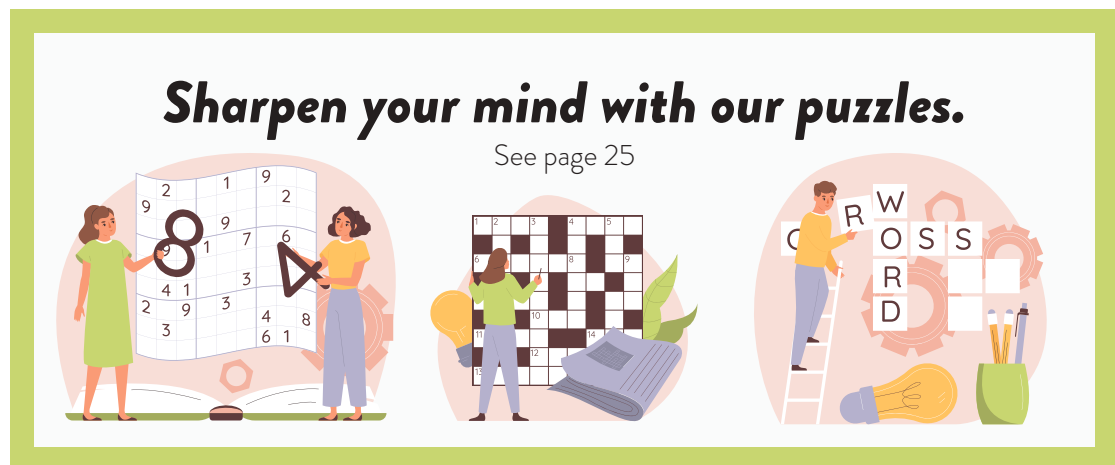
- Conducted a foot patrol in the downtown Center Street area of Brandon.
- Responded to a domestic disturbance on Grove Street.
- Received a complaint regarding a green flatbed truck towing a trailer that was emitting a large amount of black smoke from its exhaust in the area of Route 73 and Furnace Road. The area was checked, but the vehicle was not located.
- Received a walk-in report regarding an assault that occurred between two female students at OVUHS. Investigation is ongoing.
- Received a complaint regarding a juvenile problem at the Neshobe Elementary School.
- Responded to a traffic hazard involving a car that was blocking traffic on Park Street. The responding officer assisted the motorist in removing the vehicle from the roadway.
- Conducted routine traffic enforcement on Grove Street, during which a vehicle was stopped for speeding. The operator had a criminally suspended driver's license and was taken into custody. The operator was released with a citation to appear before the Rutland Superior Court for arraignment on 5/20/2024 at 10:00 am.
- Assisted an employee at H&R Block on Franklin Street in securing the building due to a mechanical issue with the door.

## April 4

- Responded to a burglary alarm (See Police report, Page 27)

## Sharpen your mind with our puzzles.

See page 25



# 'Judgment proof': Timber theft highlights a gap in Vermont's judicial system

BY EMMA COTTON/  
VT DIGGER

EAST MONTPELIER — When Barbara and Roger Clark asked a logging company to harvest some of the trees on their roughly 80-acre property in 2013, they had no idea they would soon become the victims of a seemingly unpunishable crime.

Sitting at her dining room table with her son, Barbara Clark didn't remember exactly how she found David, Paul and Joseph Codling, who operate a logging business in neighboring Plainfield. Roger was sick at the time and later died of cancer. Barbara remembers that Roger showed the Codlings which trees to cut — the ones with blue

tape tied around their trunks — and then the couple, kept busy by Roger's illness, left them largely to their work.

"We grew up in an era where your word was good," she told VT-Digger in an interview.

A Washington County civil court judge would later rule that the Codlings took far more timber than they'd promised. The loggers left piles of debris that took the Clarks two summers to clean, and freshly opened patches of sunlight gave invasive species new life.

While the Codlings took tens of thousands of dollars worth of timber, according to court documents, the Clarks never saw a dime. On June 15, 2016, Superior Court

Judge Timothy Tomasi ordered the Codlings to pay the Clarks more than \$240,000, with an annual interest rate of 12% on any unpaid balance.

But in timber theft cases in Vermont, court orders often don't accomplish much. Almost eight years later, as of this month, the Codlings still hadn't paid the Clarks.

In many states, such an unpaid fine would result in jail time, Rep. Marc Mihaly, D-East Calais, told lawmakers in the House Agriculture, Food Resilience and Forestry Committee earlier in this year's legislative session. In Vermont, the state refers the fine to a collection agency, which sends a nasty but ignorable letter, according to Mih-

aly. Perpetrators of timber theft, he said, are "not unintelligent in their approach."

Mihaly is one of the primary sponsors of H.614, the state's latest attempt to put an end to the practice. The bill passed the Vermont House last month on a voice vote with little debate and is now under consideration in the Senate.

The bill would create a new category of crime for timber theft, called land improvement fraud, similar to home improvement fraud, which is already a crime. It would add land improvement fraud to the existing home improvement fraud registry, which publishes the names of people who have been convicted of either forms of fraud,

making it easier for a landowner to search before accepting a logger's services.

But on its journey through House committees, the bill has lost some of its teeth, including a provision that made it easier to seize the logging equipment owned by serial offenders. Without it, some question whether the proposed law would make an impact.

Reached by phone in February after the state Attorney General's Office filed suit against the Codlings, alleging they had violated the state's Consumer Protection Act, David Codling said he wasn't aware of the \$240,000 judgment against him from the Clarks' law-  
*(See Timber theft, Page 29)*

## Police report

*(Continued from Page 26)*

activation on Forest Dale Road.

- Responded to North Street for a car crash.

- Responded to downed wires on Grove Street due to the snowstorm. The wires were removed by Green Mountain Power and the roadway was reopened to traffic.

- Received a report of a utility pole that had fallen on Florence Road. Officers deployed barricades to keep traffic out of the area until Green Mountain Power was on scene.

- Responded to a residence on Newton Road for a 911 hang up call. It was determined that there was no emergency and that the cause of the call was most likely due to the ongoing snowstorm that had caused a temporary power outage and likely effected the phone lines at the home.

- Received a disturbance complaint of a man and woman arguing outside an apartment building on Mulcahy Drive. The information received from the caller and a witness indicated the argument was verbal and did not warrant police involvement.

### April 5

- Chief Kachajian and Patrolman First Class Alnwick (w/K9 Guinness) spoke to students at OVUHS about law enforcement for career day.

- Responded to a minor two-car crash in the parking lot of OVUHS. The cars, which were stuck together and needed the assistance of a tow company to be separated, sustained minor damage. The crash was documented for insurance purposes.

- Assisted the Brandon Area Rescue Squad (BARS) with a lift assist on Franklin Street.

- Received information regarding an ongoing criminal case.

- Received a report of a lost dog in the area of Adams Road and Ar-

nold District Road.

- Vehicle stop on Franklin Street for failure to maintain travel lane. Warning issued.

- Conducted traffic enforcement at the intersection of Franklin Street and Park Street. One warning issued.

- Responded to a fire alarm at OVUHS. The alarm had been accidentally activated.

- Vehicle stop on Park Street for a traffic control violation. Warning issued.

### April 6

- Responded to a report of a suspicious man in a vehicle who appeared to be slumped over the wheel on Stone Mill Dam Road. Officers contacted the individual and it was found that he was fine.

- Responded to a fire alarm activation on Grove Street. The responding officer determined that there was no fire, but rather someone at the home had accidentally burned some popcorn. The fire department was subsequently cancelled.

- Responded to the area of Arnold District Road and Mulcahy Drive for a report of a disabled vehicle with its flashers on. The vehicle was gone upon the arrival of the responding officer.

- Vehicle stop on Smalley Road for multiple traffic violations that occurred on Park Street. Ticket was issued for a stop sign violation.

- Conducted traffic enforcement on Mulcahy Drive. No violations observed.

- Conducted traffic enforcement at the intersection of Franklin Street and Park Street. One operator was stopped for a red-light violation. Ticket issued.

- Conducted traffic enforcement on High Pond Road at Union Street. No violations observed.

- Vehicle stop on Grove Street, during which the investigating of-

ficer discovered that the driver had a criminally suspended driver's license. The officer also developed suspicion that the vehicle contained illegal drugs. The K9 unit later indicated the presence of drugs and a search warrant was obtained. A search revealed the presence of cocaine. The operator was issued a citation to appear before the Rutland County Superior Court for arraignment on 5/20/2024 at 10:00 a.m.

### April 7

- Vehicle stop on Champlain Street for failure to maintain travel lane. The officer observed several signs of impairment and obtained

a preliminary breath sample that yielded a result nearly 3 times the legal limit. The operator was transported to Rutland Regional Medical Center where he was issued a citation to appear before the Rutland Superior Court for arraignment on 7/22/2024 at 10:00 a.m.

- Received a call regarding suspicious activity in which someone was looking around a residence late at night.

- Vehicle stop on Marble Street for a stop sign violation. Warning issued.

- Assisted the Brandon Recreation Department with traffic control for the "Zombie Walk" on Park


Street.

- Received a complaint in the area of West Seminary Street of a suspicious vehicle that had been circling the neighborhood.

- Vehicle stop on Grove Street for traffic signal violation. Warning issued.

- Assisted BARS with a medical call at the River Pub on Center Street involving a child who was having trouble breathing. The child was later transported to Porter Hospital for treatment.

- Conducted a search warrant on a vehicle that was suspected of containing illegal drugs.



## WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

**Cancer.** Focus on group work, as this will showcase how well you work with others.

**LEO July 23-Aug. 23**  
Leo, you do not know which direction to go in this week, and that is perfectly fine. Try out different options and figure out what fits best. This will require some trial and error.

**ARIES March 21-April 20**  
Aries, this is a great week for transformation. Be careful where you direct your attention, as what you do will have lasting effects. Choose your plans wisely.

**TAURUS April 21-May 21**  
Use this week's powerful energy to strip away all of the unnecessary static in your life right now. It is doing more harm than good. Open yourself up to new opportunities, Taurus.

**GEMINI May 22-June 21**  
Gemini, there is a lot of stuff going on around you, and you need to sort through the noise to determine your priorities. Things will start to become more clear this week.

**CANCER June 22-July 22**  
You are in a great position to make some lasting and strong impressions on others,

**VIRGO Aug. 24-Sept. 22**  
Virgo, you have a tremendous amount of power at your disposal this week. Use all of it wisely and thoughtfully. Others will be strongly affected by your presence.

**LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 23**  
A conflict in your life that you may feel is beyond your control may crop up at the worst time, Libra. Use this as a learning opportunity on how to cope under pressure.

**SCORPIO Oct. 24-Nov. 22**  
Scorpio, you have the power to produce a powerful outcome, even if it seems that forces are working against you. Do not give up; in fact, double down your efforts.

**SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21**  
Sagittarius, take things with a grain of salt if people seem insensitive to your feelings this week. You don't know what others have going on in their lives.

**CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 20**  
Nothing can stop you when you put a lot of gusto behind your efforts, Capricorn. Just be mindful of who you might affect if you take things with a little too much ambition.

**AQUARIUS Jan. 21-Feb. 18**  
Aquarius, are you getting the sense that something is going on around you that you're simply not a part of? Maybe your exclusive invitation is just waiting in the wings. Be patient.

**PISCES Feb. 19-March 20**  
Pisces, stand up for what you want, even if means that you are taking a different stance than others. You don't have to please everyone in every endeavor.

~~~~~

### FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

April 12 Jon Krakauer, writer (70)  
 April 13 Seamus Heaney, poet (d)  
 April 14 Loretta Lynn, singer (d)  
 April 15 Arshile Gorky, painter (d)  
 April 16 Merce Cunningham, dancer, choreographer (d)  
 April 17 Karen Blixen, writer (d)  
 April 18 America Ferrera, actor (40)

# As visitors depart and traffic wanes, Vermont begins to tally eclipse's impact

BY ERIN PETENKO & JUAN VEGA DE SOTO/VTDIGGER

As visitors continued to depart Vermont a day after the total solar eclipse drew crowds of thousands, public safety officials from around the state said they were still tallying estimates of how many cars and people had shown up.

But two things seemed clear on Tuesday morning, they said: A whole lot of people came to Vermont. And although outbound traffic was significant in the hours after the main event Monday afternoon, extending southbound drive times by hours in some cases, no major crises had befallen the state.

In fact, some authorities said, many motorists among the masses were downright pleasant.

"People were very patient, respectful, rolling down their windows to say thank you to us," said Newport Police Chief Travis Bingham, who described the crowds as the largest he's seen in his 20 years of working for the Northeast Kingdom city.

St. Johnsbury Town Manager Chad Whitehead shared a similar report, saying of traffic-jammed motorists: "They understood."

And Lt. Tom Howard, acting commander of the Vermont State Police barracks in Berlin, was "thankful" about how the day turned out, even amid massive traffic.

"Everyone that I got to see seemed to be in a pretty good

mood," he said.

The day was not without incident. Mark Bosma, a spokesperson for Vermont Emergency Management, said at least 10 traffic accidents with injuries were reported on Monday, though he was not sure of the severity.

Howard said state police got

points Daley observed were the intersection of interstates 89 and 91 in White River Junction, and farther south on I-91 where bridge construction forced motorists into a single lane in the Putney/Westminster area. Traffic was generally quite slow but not stopped, he said.

Overall, Bosma said, things



**NORTHBOUND TRAFFIC ON Interstate 89 in Berlin before the eclipse on Monday.**

Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur/VTDigger

a few calls from people who were stranded or stuck on back roads that their GPS told them to take, not realizing how tricky the roads would be.

Similarly, Vermont State Police Capt. Matt Daley said although there were no major crashes, he received word of a few "fender benders" and tow requests.

The biggest traffic choke

went well from the emergency management team's perspective. The "biggest issue was the need for water" at the southbound welcome centers in Sharon, Lyndonville and Williston, mostly due to "the wells needing a little time to refill themselves with all the extra flushes and hand washing," he said in an email exchange. However, portable toilets at the sites ensured bathroom



**A LARGE CROWD gathers at the Statehouse in Montpelier on Monday to view the eclipse**

Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur/VTDigger

facilities were available.

In addition to other alerts, the state reported parking at capacity in St. Johnsbury and Newport in the hours before the eclipse, which took place shortly before 3:30 p.m.

The state had previously projected as many as 160,000 people — about a quarter of Vermont's population — could come to the state for the big event, generally considered a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence that lasts for a few minutes or less. On Tuesday, Bosma said the state would "look at indicators over the next days and weeks to come up with an estimate" for how many people actually arrived.

But Bingham, the Newport chief, was already making a comparison to some of Ver-

mont's other biggest events, including a rock band's infamous 2004 break-up concert that drew some 68,000 people to nearby Coventry.

"The only other thing was the Phish concert, but we didn't get a lot of spillover from that," Bingham said. He estimated there were at least 20,000 eclipse-watchers in Newport on Monday, a nearly fivefold increase of its normal population.

Howard, in the Berlin barracks, said that the area had slow-moving traffic until at least 9 p.m.

"I'm from out of state, so it looked like an evening commute in the state I'm from," he said. "But certainly not something that I have seen in Vermont in my time working here."



## Middlebury Community Chorus joins the eclipse festivities

THE MIDDLEBURY COMMUNITY Chorus performed a special eclipse program at Brandon Town Hall on Sunday. They're shown here in rehearsal.

Photo by Mitchell Pearl

# Timber theft

(Continued from Page 27)

suit. “I never got a thing on paper, or from anybody, that that happened,” he said.

## ‘EVERYBODY’S PISSSED’

The Clarks are not alone. Over the years, in the Statehouse, in the

“This is actually a problem I didn’t know anything about, until I was brought into a room with about a half-dozen very angry constituents,” Mihaly told lawmakers when the bill was first introduced

The court ordered the loggers to pay \$11,751. But at that time, Ken Bacon had “already been subjected to compliance proceedings, enforcement litigation and fines for violations similar to those he and his son committed” on the state and private property, Durkin stated.

By 2017, the state had taken the Bacons to court for three different

He reflected on his yearslong efforts trying to make the Bacons and other rulebreakers comply.

“This issue is important to me, because when I was at ANR, this was something that we struggled with constantly,” Kessler said. He told them he had just seen a recent news broadcast that highlighted continued alleged violations and theft by the Bacon family, “the same people that we were prosecuting back when I was at ANR in 2010, 2011, 2012.”

By the time Kessler left the Agency of Natural Resources, the agency had not been successful at holding the loggers accountable or retrieving the state’s money.

“I would describe myself as relentless in trying to get the money that the state was owed after we got a judgment,” Kessler said, “but there are those people that are effectively judgment proof.”

## THE ENFORCEMENT PROBLEM

Historically, timber theft in Vermont has often been treated as a breach of contract — a civil matter — though it can result in tens or hundreds of thousand dollars in damage to property owners. Sometimes, that’s money that older Vermonters are counting on to supplement a fixed income.

Earlier this year, Attorney General Charity Clark brought a civil lawsuit against the Codlings on the grounds of consumer fraud. If Clark’s office succeeds, each consumer could get up to \$10,000, she said. Clark said the office can take measures to enforce potential judgments, but did not elaborate about what those enforcement actions could be.

Asked why she brought the lawsuit now, Clark, who assumed the role just more than a year ago, said that she brings lawsuits only after months of negotiations with a defendant — in this case, the Codlings — to try to reach a settlement.

“If we sue, our negotiations have failed,” she said.

Codling told VTDigger he’s received “paperwork” from the Vermont Attorney General’s office for “the last nine or ten years.” For that time, he’s ignored it. “I said, ‘I don’t know who you are,’” he said of the paperwork. “This could be a scam.”

Lawmakers have tried before to ramp up possible penalties for timber theft. In 2016, the Legislature made the act a criminal offense. However, the same issues of capacity that have plagued Vermont’s judicial system across the board have prevented that law from effectively addressing the problem.

Members of the Judiciary Committee interviewed a long list of people from Vermont’s law enforcement and judicial spheres — the commissioner of the Fish & Wildlife Department, sheriffs, police officers, state’s attorneys, representatives from the Attorney General’s Office — and heard the same answer: No one has the expertise or the capacity to prosecute or enforce cases of timber theft.

Partly, that’s because of something prosecutors have long said: They don’t have the resources to prosecute any but the most urgent criminal matters.

“We have 21,600 pending criminal matters in our court system right now,” Tim Lueders-Dumont, (See *Timber theft*, Page 31)



MICHAEL CARRIVEAU OF Plainfield says he was ripped off by unscrupulous loggers.

File photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

offices of the attorney general and Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, and in at least one citizen group created for people who have experienced timber theft, Vermonters have told different versions of the same story.

Michael Carriveau’s Plainfield home looks out on a hilly landscape dotted with ragged tree stumps of varying sizes. He, too, won a civil lawsuit against the Codlings, representing himself in Washington County court, after he said they took more trees than he had requested and left his property a mess in 2018.

In court, the “goal post was constantly shifting,” said Carriveau, who describes himself as a senior citizen and a veteran. The Codlings have never paid his judgments. By the time the judge asked whether he wanted to file a contempt of court charge, he’d had enough.

“I realized I was fighting a system that was doing nothing for me,” he said.

After that, Carriveau went looking for answers, finding two dozen other victims. Most did not go to court, he told lawmakers, “because it was well-known by the general population: Restitution was not, I repeat, not, going to be forthcoming.” He contacted state police and prosecutors, the Vermont Department of Forest and Recreation, a statewide forest industry group — and Mihaly.

in January.

A lot of the angry people are other loggers: The relatively tiny subset of the industry gives all of them a bad name, he said.

“It’s really amazing,” Mihaly said. “When you’re in the room, everybody’s pissed. Everybody’s frustrated at the inability to get at these guys.”

Judgment proof

Even when the state itself is a party to the court action, regulators have had trouble holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, and stopping them in the future.

In 2006, loggers Ken Bacon and Ken Bacon Jr. received permission to cross state land to access a job on a privately owned parcel, then repeatedly violated the rules and practices required for doing so, according to a 2010 Environmental Court decision on the matter issued by Judge Thomas Durkin.

They crossed several streams with logging equipment, causing sediment and debris to discharge into roughly 1,000 feet of stream length, according to the court decision. In one case, the loggers’ equipment “completely eliminated any discernible stream channel,” Durkin wrote.

The Bacons stopped appearing at visits the state requested and did not respond to notices of violation. Eventually, the property owner paid for the cost of remediating the site.

matters — and won each time. A contempt order required the loggers to “cease all logging business activity ... in their personal or any business names.”

In the state’s case against the Bacons, Gary Kessler, formerly the director of the compliance and enforcement division of the Agency of Natural Resources, got permission from the court to seize logging equipment. Investigators from the Agency of Natural Resources worked with county sheriffs and law enforcement from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. They located the machinery, then encountered a brick wall: The sheriffs would not move forward with the seizure.

The sheriffs cited a law that protects certain property, including equipment that a person uses to make a living, from being seized by the government, according to Kessler.

In January, Kessler sat before lawmakers in the House committee, urging them to pass a law with enough force to break the cycle of impunity.

“If somebody was a locksmith but also a thief, and you said, ‘we’re gonna seize your lock picking equipment,’ and they said, ‘wait, I use that for my job!’ — well, sure you do, but you also use it for something else. You know, it’s sort of the same situation here,” he told lawmakers.

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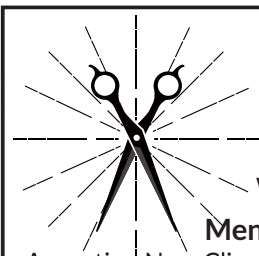
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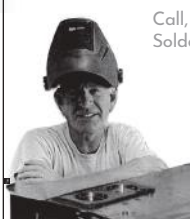
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# Timber theft

(Continued from Page 29)  
a deputy state's attorney with the Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs, told lawmakers in testimony about H.614. "They're being handled by 58 deputy state's attorneys and 14 state's attorneys. We are in an absolute crisis of resources."

Pressure has been mounting to focus on violent or more serious crime. Timber theft is also an area in which few, if any, prosecutors are experienced.

"We have experts in domestic violence, experts in drug prosecution, experts in homicide prosecution, unfortunately," Lueders-Dumont told lawmakers. "The ones that aren't bubbling up as much, sometimes they don't have the same level of expertise, resources and training."

Even if a party brings a case and wins against the loggers, no law enforcement agency has claimed the responsibility for holding the loggers to their judgments.

"We just don't have the capacity to add a whole other area of enforcement to our portfolio," Chris Herrick, commissioner of the Department of Fish & Wildlife, told lawmakers. Even if lawmakers allocated more funding for the effort, Herrick said he is "not sure that this lends itself to the typical fish and game law enforcement things that are a little more specialized."

Presenting the bill on the House floor, Rep. Jed Lipsky, I-Stowe, himself a lifelong logger, said that "local police, sheriffs, state police, all have allowed that, in most cases, they lack the expertise, experience or resources to do these types of investigations."

In contrast, states such as New Hampshire and Maine have dedicated forest rangers who work on issues including timber theft, and attorneys who understand how to prosecute the cases, according to Northern Woodlands.

## 'A BUNCH OF PAPER'

Among other measures to strengthen current law against timber theft, the original version of H.614 would have allowed the Attorney General or another law enforcement agency to seize equipment used in the theft.

But as with criminal prosecution, state officials have testified that they don't have the resources to carry out such a seizure.

Kessler told lawmakers that the bill, H.614, would be most effective if it included the provision that allowed law enforcement to seize logging equipment.

Yet later, discussions in the House Judiciary Committee questioned the seizure section of the bill.

Was it lawful — or fair — to confiscate the equipment a per-

son needs to make a living? How would the seizure help the victims? Where would the equipment be stored?

"I'm starting to increasingly feel uncomfortable that this isn't fully baked, and I only mean the seizure and forfeiture part," Rep. Martin LaLonde, D-South Burlington, chair of the House Judiciary Committee, told other lawmakers in late February.

Owen Ballinger, a lieutenant with the Vermont State Police, said that although the Department of Public Safety supports the bill, "we just don't have the storage capability to seize skidders, trailers, large trucks and store them for any length of time."

With Vermont's constraints in mind, members of the House Judiciary Committee stripped the seizure and forfeiture section. Instead, they asked the Attorney General's Office to study the issue, and report back to lawmakers next year.

Rep. Ela Chapin, D-East Montpelier, a judiciary committee member who presented the bill to lawmakers on the House floor last month, defended the bill as effective, even without the seizure component.

The legislation "is intended to give law enforcement and prosecutors more tools to capture more of this activity and hold people accountable," Chapin said in an interview.

Other measures in H.614 would prohibit people who have been convicted of land improvement fraud from working for themselves or a relative. In order to earn money for logging, they would have to work for a company or person who does not have any fraud violations against them.

Finally, the person would need to either disclose their conviction to their new employer or post a \$250,000 surety bond with the Attorney General's Office. That provision would apply retroactively, so it would capture loggers includ-

ing the Codlings and the Bacons who have outstanding unpaid judgments.

A man holding papers in his living room.

"What I see that we're doing here is disabling them from making a living if they don't follow through on what the court has ordered," Chapin said. "And the other big thing we're doing this session is trying to give the courts the resources they need to have capacity to do the workload that they have."

But without the seizure component, Kessler told VTDigger he's concerned that the bill isn't truly enforceable.

"In the end, this is a bunch of paper, and if somebody just wants to ignore it, they will until somebody takes their equipment and they can't log anymore," he said.

For Carriveau, the loggers' apparent impunity has represented a blatant systemic failure. He has a list of other researched solutions, some of which didn't make it into the bill: requiring all loggers to have a license, for example, or requiring receipts from logging jobs, such as mill slips and trip tickets to be made available to landowners. But he's happy to see the issue under lawmakers' microscope.

Carriveau often sat in the House Agriculture Committee while lawmakers discussed the bill. Asked in an interview about how he felt about the fact that the measure was gaining traction, he said he felt "ecstatic."

Clark, who is still owed a \$240,000 judgment from the Codlings, talks with Carriveau often. She credited him with bringing the issue to the fore.

"There's nothing we could do about it. Our hands were tied, really, until Michael started putting together things," she said. "He's fighting for this — he really is."

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