



7TH ANNUAL PICO HIKO SPLITFEST IS FRIDAY, FEB. 23

Head to Pico Mountain for a splitboarding exhibition celebrating the blend of snowboarding, uphill travel and backcountry skiing.

Page 31



KPAA HOSTS KILLINGTON SELECT BOARD CANDIDATES FORUM

Head to the Killington Welcome Center this Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 5 p.m. for a discussion between candidate Andrew Gieda and incumbent Jim Haff. It'll also be on FaceBook, both streaming live and to view later, if you missed the action!



MOUNTAIN VIEWS SUPERVISORY UNION BUDGET REPORT

School district reports on past year and future budgeting plan.

Page 16-22

Local taxpayers to see double-digit increases in ed tax rates, again

MVSU district budget, yield, rates, effect on taxes, questioned

By Polly Mikula

The difference between a projected statewide yield per student of \$10,250 and \$9,775, probably doesn't cause alarm for most. But the effect on local taxes could be significant: to the tune of a 11% increase in the base equalized tax rate and a 15%-30% increase after each town's Common Level of Appraisal is factored in.

For a homestead in Killington on the Grand List for \$500,000 that means \$15,373 in education taxes if Mountain Views Supervisory Union's (MVSU) projected yield of \$10,250 proves correct — and \$703 more if the \$9,775 yield is applied.

After the CLA is applied, that Killington homestead will pay 30% or about \$3,720 more than was owed last year. And last year's education taxes were up over 23% compared to the year prior.

The seven towns that make up the MVSU district — Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading and Woodstock — will all see steep increases (see chart on page 5) if the budget is approved on Town Meeting Day, March 5.

While skyrocketing property values account for most of the increases; the MVSU proposed budget of \$29,756,674 is also a factor. It's up \$3.9 million over last year's approved budget (a 15.2% increase).

When originally crafting the FY25 budget the MVSU district board and finance personnel were working under different calculation scenarios as Act 127 had kept the district to a 5% cap on the equalized tax rate, as long as they kept their per pupil spending under the 10% growth threshold.

But last minute changes to those calculations from the state abruptly changed the scenario. At an emergency meeting Friday, Feb. 2, the MVSU district board voted to amend the proposed district budget after the House Ways & Means committee and Agency of Education alerted them to the changes in funding calculations. MVSU Superintendent Sherry Sousa told the district board the state education fund estimated a serious shortfall — to the tune of \$100 million — which necessitated the last minute changes.

Two of the changes mostly affected the funding calculations. First is the replacement of the 5% cap with a targeted 1 cent discount on homestead properties for every percentage decrease in their tax capacity. (Bill H.850, is fast making its way through the Legislature.)

"Under the proposed language of H.850 section 2 we are also a District that will qualify for a discount on our homestead tax rate," MVSU Finance Director Jim Fenn wrote in an email.

House representative Jim Harrison also confirmed that Killington and the MVSU district qualify for the 1 cent discount.

Secondly, the state changed the estimated statewide yield, Yield → 5

The effect on local taxes could be significant ... a 15%-30% increase after a town's CLA is factored in.

Agency of Ed endorses plan to build new Woodstock school

Qualifies project as eligible for state aid, once reinstated as expected

The state Agency of Education (AOE) has endorsed Mountain Views Supervisory Union's (MVSU) plans for its new middle/high school construction project. This decision qualifies the project for construction aid upon the state's reinstatement of the program.

"The Capital Outlay Financing Formula (COFF) establishes the maximum and minimum square foot parameters by school size (student capacity) and grade range, through a square foot allowance per student or program. The formula also establishes the allowable cost per square foot for construction... A review of the information submittals has confirmed that minimum square footages have been met for all program and service spaces in the proposed design," wrote AOE School Facilities Program Manager Bob Donohue in the state's enforcement letter, Feb. 16

On Town Meeting Day, March 5, voters in the MSVU School district will vote on a bond for \$99 million to finance the new school.

The AOE's decision underscores MVSU's School Board's dedicated efforts over the past eight years to align our project with the current objectives outlined in the "Vermont Educational Priorities," according to the district school's news release. These priorities, outlined by the State Construction Aid Task Force in its February 1 report to the House and Senate Education Committees, emphasize equity, quality, and clear mandate for "Newer and Fewer" Vermont school buildings.

New build → 5

Killington Resort roars into spring with loaded events lineup



By John Everett, Killington Resort
A skier performed a clean grab of a jump at Killington's Peace Park during the Woodward Wind Down last spring.

Killington Resort is roaring into spring with a jam-packed event series as the longest season in the East extends beyond the rest.

"Spring may just be the best time to visit The Beast,"

"Long after other resorts have called it quits, the longest season in the East rages on with iconic events," said Solimano.

said Mike Solimano, president and general manager of Killington Resort. "Long after other resorts have called it quits, the longest season in the East rages on with iconic events such as the Bear Mountain Mogul Challenge and Pond Skim. Spring at the Beast → 36

Killington Town Meeting Day preview

Q&A with Killington Town Manager Michael Ramsey

Staff report

In advance of the upcoming Town Meeting Day vote, March 5, the Mountain Times caught up with Killington Town Manager Michael Ramsey to clarify some of the more nuanced articles voters will be asked to approve.

Article 1 asks voters to elect officials (a moderator, Select Board member, lister, cemetery commissioner and library trustee) and **Article 2** asks voters to approve paying property taxes in three installments. We've skipped over those here, but look for upcoming coverage of the only contested position: one Select Board seat. Incumbent Jim Haff is being challenged by Andrew Gieda. A public forum for the candidates will be held Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 5 p.m. at the Killington Welcome Center and posted on Facebook.

Article 3 asked voters to approve a municipal budget that is up 9.5% over last year, a \$611,520 increase (\$7,021,304 vs. \$6,409,784) what are the major drivers for this increase in town spending?

Michael Ramsey: The driving force behind the FY25 [municipal] budget increase is staffing, but talking to municipal managers in neighboring communities, a 9.5% increase in operational expenses is not an outlier. For a bigger picture, averaged out over six years, Killington has had an annual tax rate growth of 4.7%. This figure was calculated by taking the rate from 2019 (.4665) and finding the percentage increase to 2025 (approximately .6), then dividing it over 6 years.

I'll go into more detail about emergency management later in this Q&A, but it's important to understand that municipal leaders throughout the state are struggling to operate governments on lean budgets that exclude funds for proper staffing. A big reason for this is that Vermont's historical model of volunteers running governments alone isn't adapting well to the high expectations of taxpayers, advancements in technology, and mandates passed down from regulatory agencies.

We are also trying to compete with funds that are offered on the state and national levels. Unfortunately, rural communities oftentimes fail to be competitive on this stage because they (we) lack the capacity to apply, manage, implement, and monitor multiple outside-funded projects with significant impact at the same time.

It's our mission to take advantage of grants and loans that have disproportionately been awarded to more affluent communities and to do that, we need to invest in highly capable professionals to work in our local government. Killington is strategically taking on complex projects through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) that include developing a long-deserved ski village and municipal water system, working with FEMA to reclaim millions of dollars in flood repairs, and grabbing at every outside dollar available to improve the lives of our current and future residents.

There seems to be an increase in administrative positions at town hall over the past year. Is this the case? What positions were added and why were they needed?

MR: It's slightly more complicated than this, but yes, our team has grown. Allow me to elaborate.

After a few months following my appointment [last summer], we saw the need to restructure the planning and finance departments. In planning, we hired Lisa Davis-Lewis full-time as the director of planning so that she could shift from being a hired outside consultant to a more permanent fixture within the organization. This



Submitted

Town Manager Michael Ramsey enjoys a day on the slopes.

change allows her to work more closely with staff and continue the amazing work she performs on the "Killington Forward Initiative" and everything else planning-related. It's important to note that the planning director was not outside of the budget, and on top of that, we no longer pay consultation fees due to having this position filled.

In the finance department, we have brought on a highly qualified Finance Director Mary Ellen Keenan-Haff, who has brought together a high-functioning finance team, which allowed us to cut a previously budgeted line item that called for a mid-level staff accountant. For clarity, Keenan-Haff's position was budgeted for but was previously titled "Finance Manager."

To manage FEMA projects, highway grants, capital budgeting, and future infrastructure, the Select Board authorized the creation of a public works director position, which is now being held by Abbie Sherman. Although her salary is a new budget line for FY25, a large majority of her pay will be covered through FEMA aid and will eventually be heavily subsidized by ratepayers of the new municipal water system. Due to this, we can expect a decrease in expenses for the FY26 public works portion of the General Fund budget, and perhaps a saving in FY25, too.

Next year's proposed budget calls for more personnel, which has caused some voters to feel uneasy, specifically in an increase in multiple full-time positions added to the fire department. How many new positions does this year's budget include for the fire department and other departments?

MR: Building a fire and police department that can keep up with industry standards and make our community safer is a targeted goal of the Select Board, so let's look at some of the numbers that influenced the proposed FY25 emergency management budget. In 2022, the police department

worked 692 cases and responded to 1,219 calls. In 2023, the caseload increased to 1,044 with 1,701 calls.

As for the fire department, Chief Ginther and his team responded to over 55 calls last January, which included two structural fires and two deaths.

To keep up with our needs, the FY25 budget plans for a total of six paid firefighters/EMTs, and five police officers. This is an addition of three firefighters and one police officer from FY24.

By far these changes had the most significant impact on the upcoming budget, but we need to be able to respond to every emergency in the fastest way possible. Without the additional emergency service personnel that the town is requesting from the voters, responding to emergency calls effectively and efficiently will present a challenge that comes with unnecessary risk.

Last Town Meeting Day, voters approved \$1.6 million "for the purpose of purchasing and renovating the property at 2046 U.S. Route 4 to become the new Town Hall?" What's the status of that project? What's the timeline for town hall to move in? What's the plan for the current town hall building? Will it be able to help serve the recreation programs and camps this summer?

MR: Moving the town hall is a big project, but we're giving it all we've got. Structural engineers will have inspected the building by the time this article makes it to the printers, and I've been told that architectural plans will be completed by then also. We have about \$600,000 to renovate the building, which includes the installation of a vault for the clerk's office, a voting center, new office spaces, and a stairway to connect the clerk's office downstairs, with the administrative offices upstairs. We hope to be in the new space by late summer. After that, the old town hall will be a hub for seniors, historians, and the recreation department.

Excitingly, one last time we get to share the town hall on River Road with the kids who are signing up for camp this summer!

The final two articles on the ballot this year are unique. First, Article 4: "Shall the Town of Killington authorize cannabis retailers and the retail portions of integrated license operations in the Town pursuant to 7 V.S.A §863?" Can you explain this in a bit more detail? What are the limitations for retail cannabis, geographically in town, size of operations, distances from schools, etc.?

MR: Put simply, registered voters in Killington will have an opportunity to choose whether cannabis can be sold in town or not. In preparation for this vote, the planning

commission and the Select Board ratified zoning bylaws after two public hearings to restrict the sale of cannabis to the commercial Killington basin district along Killington Road.

If voters opt in for retail cannabis on March 5, the newly adopted bylaws also require that facilities be less than 3,000 square feet of sales area, be 500 feet from a licensed childcare facility or any public or private school certified by the Vermont Agency of Education, and be 250 feet from a municipal park or recreational facility. More information on the amended bylaws can be found on our website.

The second unique article this year is Article 5. "Shall the town authorize the Select Board to perform a study on the impacts of leaving the Mountain View Supervisory

Q&A Killington ballot → 15

The FY25 budget plans for a total of six paid firefighters/EMTs, and five police officers. This is an addition of three firefighters and one police officer from FY24.

RRMC earns Blue Distinction Center designation for maternity care

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont (Blue Cross) has selected Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) as a Blue Distinction Center for Maternity Care, part of the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program. Blue Distinction Centers are nationally designated healthcare facilities shown to deliver improved patient safety and better health outcomes, based on objective measures that were developed by Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies with input from the medical community.

RRMC is currently the only Blue Distinction® Center for Maternity Care Program in the state of Vermont.

Maternity care → 14



Courtesy RRMC

Members of the Women's & Children's Unit and Birthing Center at RRMC pictured (l-r): Megan Hasbrouck, RN; Amy Williams, RN; Justine Franko, RN, manager of WACU; Leah Romine, RN, director Women's & Children's Unit; Jody McIntosh, RN; Becky Allen, RN; Chloe Harris, Dr. Ananda Boyer; Dr. Sarah Decker, Medical Director, Rutland Women's Healthcare.

RRMC receives outpatient joint replacement excellence award, named top 10% of U.S. hospitals

Rutland Regional Medical Center announced Feb. 15 that it has been recognized as a 2024 Outpatient Joint Replacement Excellence Award recipient by Healthgrades, the leading resource consumers use to find a hospital or doctor. This achievement along with their 5-Star in Outpatient Total Hip Replacement reflects the organization's dedication to clinical excellence and distinguishes Rutland Regional Medical Center as one of the nation's leading hospitals for outpatient joint replacement. Rutland Regional is also the only hospital in Vermont and New Hampshire to receive the Outpatient Joint Replacement Excellence Award distinction.

"Rutland Regional has some of the best orthopedic surgeons in the region who are backed by a solid team of anesthesiologist, nurses and support staff," said Judi Fox, president and CEO of RRMC. "At every interaction the patient is provided the highest level of expertise and care."

To identify the top-performing hospitals for outpatient joint replacement, Healthgrades analyzed patient outcomes at short-term acute care facilities nationwide that offer knee and hip replacement in an outpatient environ-

ment. Healthgrades' analysis found that patients treated at hospitals that have been recognized for excellence in outpatient joint replacement have a demonstrably better chance at a smooth recovery than those treated at hospitals that were not recognized by Healthgrades. In fact, between 2020 and 2022, patients treated at hospitals receiving the Outpatient Joint Replacement Excellence Award had, on average, a 37.5% lower risk of experiencing a complication while in the hospital than if they were treated at hospitals that did not receive the award.

"Rutland Regional Medical Center exemplifies what it means to be a leader in outpatient orthopedics by delivering consistently superior outcomes across key outpatient procedures," said Brad Bowman, MD, chief medical officer, and head of data science at Healthgrades. "Patients undergoing outpatient joint replacement at Rutland Regional Medical Center should feel confident in their decision to seek care from a facility with top marks in their procedure."

Rutland Regional's orthopedic surgeons, OR staff, Joint care → 5

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District's Projected FY25 Tax Rates Calculations - using MVSU's projected \$10,250

	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock
FY25 Est Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.6096	\$1.6096	\$1.6096	\$1.6096	\$1.6096	\$1.6096	\$1.6096
CLA	0.6436	0.7432	0.5235	0.6225	1.0053	0.7643	0.6365
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$2.5009	\$2.1658	\$3.0747	\$2.5857	\$1.6011	\$2.1060	\$2.5288
FY24 Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.9933	\$1.8759	\$2.4713	\$1.9765	\$1.4632	\$1.8425	\$2.0198
Increase (Decrease) from FY24	\$0.5076	\$0.2899	\$0.6034	\$0.6092	\$0.1379	\$0.2635	\$0.5090
Percentage Change from FY24	25.47%	15.45%	24.42%	30.82%	9.43%	14.30%	25.20%

* Note the FY25 Est Equalized Tax Rate has been decreased by 1 cent to 1.6096 from 1.6196 with the application of H.850

Y25 Tax Rates Calculations - using state's projected \$9,775

	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock
FY25 Est Equalized Tax Rate*	\$1.6832	\$1.6832	\$1.6832	\$1.6832	\$1.6832	\$1.6832	\$1.6832
CLA	0.6436	0.7432	0.5235	0.6225	1.0053	0.7643	0.6365
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$2.6153	\$2.2648	\$3.2153	\$2.7039	\$1.6743	\$2.2023	\$2.6445
FY24 Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.9933	\$1.8759	\$2.4713	\$1.9765	\$1.4632	\$1.8425	\$2.0198
Increase (Decrease) from FY24	\$0.6220	\$0.3889	\$0.7440	\$0.7274	\$0.2111	\$0.3598	\$0.6247
Percentage Change from FY24	31.20%	20.73%	30.10%	36.80%	14.43%	19.53%	30.93%

ite has been decreased by 1 cent to 1.6832 from 1.6932 with the application of H.850

By Polly Mikula

The charts above show the effect of a \$10,250 yield (top) vs. a \$9,775 yield (below) on the tax rates in each town.

Est tax for \$500,000 Grand List Value

	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock
FY24 dollar edu tax	\$9,966.50	\$9,379.50	\$12,356.50	\$9,882.50	\$7,316.00	\$9,212.50	\$10,099.00
FY25 with \$10,250 yield	\$12,504.66	\$10,828.85	\$15,373.45	\$12,928.51	\$8,005.57	\$10,529.90	\$12,644.15
FY25 with \$9,775 yield	\$13,076.44	\$11,324.00	\$16,076.41	\$13,519.68	\$8,371.63	\$11,011.38	\$13,222.31
\$ increase: state yield of \$10,250 over FY24	\$2,538.16	\$1,449.35	\$3,016.95	\$3,046.01	\$689.57	\$1,317.40	\$2,545.15
\$ increase: state yield of \$9,775 over FY24	\$3,109.94	\$1,944.50	\$3,719.91	\$3,637.18	\$1,055.63	\$1,798.88	\$3,123.31
\$ increase: 9,775 vs 10,250 yields	\$571.78	\$495.16	\$702.96	\$591.16	\$366.06	\$481.49	\$578.16

By Polly Mikula

Chart shows the estimated dollar amount a homestead on the Grand List for \$500,000 will pay in each town based on yield.

Yield:
from page 1

which is calculated to be the per pupil spending amount the state can support with a \$1 tax rate on homestead property, according to the Vermont Legislature's Joint Fiscal Office.

Originally, under Act 127 the state had set the yield at \$9,452 per student, but when the 5% cap was removed the state revised the number up to \$9,775. That number was again confirmed Tuesday, Feb. 13, at House Ways & Means, according to Nicole Lee, director education finance at the Vermont Agency of Education.

The yield may be further revised upward after actual spending approved across the state on Town Meeting Day (or whenever school districts pass their budgets) as is the case every year.

In the meantime, however, the state has given districts \$9,775 for budgeting purposes.

When Killington Select Board member Jim Haff, who spent 15 years on the district board, and Marc Weinstein of Woodstock asked MVSU Finance Director Jim Fenn why the district chose to use the higher yield, Fenn replied that the Joint Fiscal Office has demonstrated that a yield of \$10,000 or more is achievable, depending upon Legislative choices. "The yield we are using for our calculations is one that was provided by legislators working to address the tax issue in Montpelier," Fenn wrote. "This view is being supported by AOE and legislators."

"Any number you or I put out there is only a best guess based on what we know at the moment. I believe that the numbers Ben [Ford] and I are using are based on the best information available at this time. Should that information change we will update our numbers," Fenn added.

Ben Ford, MVSU board member and chair of the finance committee, added: "Before our emergency meeting on Feb. 2 the state told us to use \$10,250 as the yield, that was their most up-to-date number at the time, so that's what we used. Yes, sometime after that I understand they've revised it back down to \$9,775. But this number is always an adjustable figure until all budgets are passed."

"In the past, our district (like every other district I know) has always used the state-given yield when presenting the school district budget for voters to approve on Town Meeting

Day," said Haff. "The state's number (\$9,775) is the statewide yield, and that number ensures that rates will not increase from there," he explained. "It's unclear why this board chose to use a higher yield than the state's number... The effect of using a higher yield is that it lowers the tax impacts of the school district budget from what is currently being shown to voters. It's not fair to voters to be presented with a budget that they think will have a 6% increase on their equalized tax rate, then actually experience an 11% increase prior to the CLA."

After factoring in the CLA, Killington homeowners will see an increase of over 30%, if the current state yield holds. "But even if you go with the more generous district guestimate of 10,250, it's still a 25.19% increase," Haff explained. "Either way, that's an unaffordable increase in spending over a single year and I think we need to look at these expenses much closer to find savings where we can."

Calculations

The equalized tax rate is calculated by subtracting local revenues from the budget (\$29,756,674 minus \$4.5 million), which is then divided by the district's 1,520 long-term-weighted equalized pupils, and then divided by the statewide yield.

- Using the district's \$10,250 yield, the FY25 equalized tax rate would be \$1.6196 — a 6.4% increase.
- Using the state's \$9,775 yield, the FY25 equalized tax rate would be \$1.6932 — an 11.23% increase.

The 1 cent discount would then be applied to the tax rate in FY2025 for either a \$1.6096 or a \$1.6832 rate, depending if you use the MVSU or state yield input, respectively.

In order to derive education tax rates for each town, that FY25 equalized tax rate is divided by the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) which adjusts taxation to fair market value. In Killington the CLA is 0.5235 so the FY25 estimated homestead property tax rate is either \$3.0747 or \$3.2153 (MVSU versus state's yield inputs, respectively).

For a home on the Killington Grand list for \$500,000 they'll pay \$3,016.95 or \$3,719.91 over last year bill (5,000 x \$3.0747 or \$3.2153 homestead tax rate, respectively). For a \$500,000 home on the Woodstock Grand list it'd be \$2,545.15 or \$3,123.31 more.

New build:
from page 1

The MVSU board highlighted points of importance in the AOE report, which included:

Consistency with state objectives

The AOE's decision affirms that this project aligns with the objectives outlined by the state construction aid task force. This includes the vision for "Newer and Fewer" school buildings, validating the district board's belief that MVSU should maintain a middle/high school serving as a hub for regional school consolidation.

The AOE's decision affirms that ... MVSU should maintain a middle/high school serving as a hub for regional school consolidation.

Strategic decision for renewal

The AOE's endorsement validates the School Board's strategic decision to replace our existing school building, avoiding investment in a facility assessed with a facility conditions index (FCI) of 96.7% in 2022. This decision aligns with the task force standards, where the threshold for renovation projects is an FCI of 65%.

Financial impact

This endorsement opens the doors to state funding. This financial support will significantly reduce the tax burden on our district's homeowners, addressing the delicate balance between the welfare of our children and the affordability of our homes.

Further, the school district's plan to defer bond repayment for 3 1/2 years offers a strategic window for the state to identify and deploy funds to support the project. "Being one of very few projects across the state ready to receive such support puts our district in an advantageous position," the board stated.

"MVSU is grateful for the AOE's recognition of our commitment to educational excellence and responsible community planning. As voters head to the polls on Town Meeting Day on March 5, we hope that the state's renewed commitment to address school construction will incentivize voters. We look forward to the next steps in bringing this longtime project to fruition and providing a safe and secure school for our children," said Sherry Sousa, MVSU's superintendent.

For more info, visit: mtnviews.org/breaking-new-ground.

Joint care:
from page 3

anesthesiologists, schedulers, follow-up care nurses, and rehabilitation services have worked together to continuously improve processes and procedures at every level in order to make outpatient joint surgery seamless and effective.

"The Healthgrades recognition for outpatient joint replacement provides strong reinforcement that the work we are doing improves patient outcomes," said Dr. Mel Boynton, medical director of the Vermont Orthopaedic Clinic at Rutland Regional Medical Center. "Our patients are at the center of everything we do, and improved patient outcomes is our most important measurement of success."

Healthgrades offers the industry's only outcomes-based outpatient ratings to help patients identify the best care for their needs. Consumers can visit Healthgrades.com to learn more about how Healthgrades measures hospital quality.

Rutland Regional Medical Center is the largest community hospital in Vermont, with approximately 1,700 employees and a medical staff of 256 physicians, nurse practitioners and advanced-practice providers covering 37 specialty areas.

For more information, visit: RRMC.org.



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HOURS: MONDAY - SATURDAY 10-5
SUNDAY 11-4 (SEASONAL CALL AHEAD)

Legislators offer bandaid to bleeding taxpayers

By Curt Peterson

Ouch! Owners of a modest \$250,000 assessed home in Hartland may face a \$1,100 property education tax increase for FY2025.

Homeowners are angry and distraught — some fear they can't afford to stay in their homes. Many blame local school districts, assuming their budgets are bloated.

They're not the only ones. Legislators and the governor claim the remedy to the "ed tax problem" can only be solved by cutting district budgets.

Nicky Buck, chair of the Hartland School Board, told the Mountain Times their \$11 million budget would have to be reduced by \$500,000 to cut the ed tax increase from 41% to 25%. A line-by-line analysis of the Hartland school budget reveals conclusively: no frivolous spending.

"We would have to cut \$3 million to avoid any tax increase, before the CLA [Common Level of Appraisal] is applied," Buck said.

Hartland is going to delay their budget vote as the state has recently allowed.

The CLA adjusts the taxable value of a town's grand list according to recent sales price records so that properties

are assessed accurately for state education taxes. The lower the CLA, the larger the tax adjustment. Hartland's CLA is 69%. Killington's CLA, lowest in the state, is 52.35%.

Sherry Sousa, Mountain View Supervisory Union (MVSU) super-

The Hartland School Board's \$11 million budget would have to be reduced by \$500,000 to cut the ed tax increase from 41% to 25%.

intendent, told the Mountain Times their board reduced their FY2025 \$30,000,000 budget by \$672,479. MVSU is a consolidated district including Killington, Woodstock, Plymouth, Pomfret, Barnard, Bridgewater and Reading.

"We lost one librarian position," Sousa said, "but we managed to make the cuts by delaying an HVAC project and some debt payoffs." MVSU adjusted their budget in time for the March 5 Town Meeting.

Lawmakers say boards are "expected to adjust their budgets," and local districts say the Legislature and the Agency of Education are the cause for

the steep tax increases, not the local schools.

Sousa pointed to some of the "unfunded mandates" imposed on districts in the past ten years as evidence.

"The Department of Education requires we provide after-school activities and universal meals, mental health care and support for special needs students, which we are happy to do, but there is no funding with the mandates," Sousa said.

Until 2007, the state supported school districts through funding infrastructure repairs, maintenance and replacement. That support ceased "due to the recession," but hasn't yet resumed. Funding of infrastructure became the responsibility of local school districts.

Many school boards, including MVSU, are floating bond issues to address deteriorating and inadequate facilities.

The 2014 state education fund was 32% of the state budget. In spite of steadily increasing state revenues, that proportion hasn't continued. In fact, at 32%, the FY2025 ed budget should be \$1.4 billion higher than the \$2 billion it currently provides.

Woodstock middle school/ high school reopened one day after threat

Staff report

On Wednesday, Feb. 14, the Mountain View School District (MVSD) administration received information about a potential threat to the Woodstock middle and high school. After speaking with police, they determined that the campus would be closed until law enforcement and crisis intervention agencies determined the campus was safe.

The school district administration and Superintendent Sherry Sousa worked closely with the Woodstock Police Dept., Windsor Sheriff's Office, Dept. of Children and Families, the Hartford Police Dept. De-Escalation Team, and Healthcare and Rehabilitation Services from Hartford to investigate and determine the level of risk.

"The police took steps to confirm that there was

no imminent threat to the campus," Principal Garon Smail, Assistant Principal Cody TanCreti and Superintendent Sherry Sousa wrote in an email to update all parents and staff of the evolving situation Wednesday afternoon. "There will be a law enforcement presence on both Thursday and Friday at the middle and high schools. Agencies are continuing to provide intervention and support to the individuals involved.

"Administration and school counselors will meet with groups and individual students to address any stress this event may have caused and to provide additional support," the email concluded.

"I really cannot provide you with details beyond this message," Sousa emailed to local media correspondents.



Welcome to
KILLINGTON PICO
STAY-PLAY-DINE-SHOP

You're Invited to the Killington Selectboard Candidates Forum

There is one Selectboard seat up for election on Town Meeting Day on March 5.

Get know the candidates:



Andrew Gieda



Jim Haff

When: Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 5 p.m.

Where: KPAA - Killington Welcome Center Center

Andrew Gieda

For Killington Selectman

**YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN
IF YOU DON'T VOTE**



**We can't spend
money we don't have!**

We can't control what the state of Vermont takes from our pockets but we can control how we spend our local budget.

IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Professionalism
- Locals First
- Lower Taxes



Legislative update: bills proposed to increase residential housing

Valentine's Day at the State House this year was surprisingly eventful and romantic. In addition to the usual round of cheer and chocolate in each committee, we celebrated the first wedding of a legislative colleague in many years. State Representative Mary-Katherine Stone married U.S. Air Force Captain Ryan Fischer on the State House steps in a short but moving ceremony. And, later that evening, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and Chorus performed a splendid program for Farmer's Night. Given the challenges we are facing this legislative session, it was a treat to have our spirits lightened for a day.

As we all know, Vermont has a housing crisis. Addressing it is one of our top legislative priorities. To that end, the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee's (SEDHGA) objective is to reduce barriers to housing development, shorten the time frame for decisions, increase the number of

people required for appeals and further enable thoughtful development of housing in smart growth areas. Our housing challenge this year has been exacerbated by the flooding in 2023 and

the fact that a substantial number of our affordable housing stock is in our downtowns, many of which are in flood plains. Future housing development needs to take this into consideration. We cannot afford to further invest in housing in the flood plain.

On Friday, Feb. 16, SEDHGA Committee passed out its BE HOME (Bringing Everyone

Home) housing bill, S.311. As we look at displaced flood victims and a significant number of unhoused Vermonters — bringing



By Sen. Alison Clarkson

people home means so much more this year. Obviously more work will be done as this bill progresses through the Senate and the House. This bill makes some bold proposals. They include requiring a municipal panel to issue a decision in 180 days, increasing the number of people needed to appeal a municipal decision to a minimum of 3% of the town's population or 25 people who participated

in the municipal process. It exempts from Act 250 the development of housing units in municipalities served by water and sewer and housing along transit corridors served by water and sewer.

S.311 calls for a study of landlord-tenant law to review what is and isn't working in our eviction process, and we take a step to further regulate short term rental health and safety.

In addition, we create a new property transfer tax of 2.5% on seasonal residents. Vermont has the highest rate of second home ownership in the country — which is significantly impacting our housing crisis. The revenue

from this one-time tax levied on seasonal home sales will go into building housing for full time residents. And the bill requires flood insurance disclosure for home sales, flood risk disclosure for residential rental agreements and for mobile home park leases.

To aid us in this housing crisis, the Natural Clarkson → 13

We propose to exempt downtowns and village centers, which are served by water and sewer, from Act 250 for ¼ mile around their designated village centers.

A reality check

During House discussion of H.850 last week, which removes the controversial 5% cap on the equalized homestead rates for education, the chair of the House Ways & Means Committee repeated the obvious: Spending increases generally cause tax increases. And that is the predicament that K-12 education budgets are in right now. If there were minor increases in education budgets, they might be covered by some growth in the Grand List and modest inflation on products on which the sales tax is applied.



By Rep. Jim Harrison

That will not be the case this year if current proposed budgets are approved by voters. Statewide, property tax rates are expected to increase 20% or more if voters approve them. And while the Legislature is poised to allow schools more time to adjust their budgets before presenting them to voters, it is unclear how many will take advantage of the extra time to reduce their proposals. Several superintendents have been critical of the Legislature changing the rules, with some indicating it was contributing to additional challenges and uncertainty. However, with large school spending increases under consideration, something must change.

The reality of revenue constraints to fund the annual state budget is also beginning to register with lawmakers, but not necessarily with advocacy groups. At last week's public hearing, Appropriation Committee members heard from members of various groups requesting more funding than is in the current budget proposal. While each ask may be for a beneficial and worthwhile cause, the only way to accommodate the requests is to raise taxes or reduce spending in another area.

There is no surplus money this year.

In the coming weeks, spending and taxes will come under scrutiny in both education and the state budget.

Other news

- At his weekly press conference last week, the governor reiterated that improving public safety was one of his top priorities and didn't think the Legislature was doing enough to combat crime. Some legislators argue that Scott didn't fund the requested 15 new positions in the Judiciary and the state's attorneys believe the administration's budget will force reduction of prosecutors (the governor proposed 5% increase for state's attorneys and sheriffs, which is more than the 3.5% overall state budget increase).
- A Senate committee advanced a housing bill that includes a rental registry program and applies the same health department regulations to short-term rentals as they apply to other lodging establishments. The legislation also includes some regulatory changes to enable more housing.
- The House Ways & Means Committee is reviewing several options to generate more revenue to support E-911 service and community access TV. Under consideration is a change to how telecom taxes are assessed as well as a new \$15 per telephone pole tax that will likely be reflected in utility rates.
- New estimates from the Public Service Dept. put the added cost of the legislation under consideration

Harrison → 13

Recycle Better™ for a Sustainable Valentine's Day



Roses are red. Violets are blue. We love recycling, how about you?

Valentine's Day can be green, too! Show your love for the planet by following these helpful tips to recycle better.



Clean and dry paper, glass bottles, and cardboard can be recycled.



Although not recyclable in your curbside bin, flowers can be composted instead of thrown in the trash. Consider giving an annual plant that blooms every year.



For more holiday recycling & waste tips, visit casella.com/RecycleBetter >
Your Local Waste & Recycling Service Provider & Proud Community Partner • 800-CASELLA •



GUEST EDITORIAL

How Vermont has changed

By Nicholas Boke

This commentary is by Nicholas Boke of Chester, a freelance writer and international education consultant. It was published earlier this month in VTDigger.

I left Vermont in 2004 mainly because I wanted to work overseas. But I also felt the need to get away from the Vermont bubble. It was such a safe place, a reasonable place where people cared about the environment and worked together on political issues; community mattered in Vermont.

My 20 years in Weathersfield had been wonderful, but it was time for something new. I found education projects in Africa and the Middle East, finally focusing mostly on Lebanon, where I lived for six years and to which I returned regularly until Covid hit.

And that was when my wife and I, after considering a number of possibilities, decided to return to Vermont.

It was an easy decision. Along with our Vermont friends and our familiarity with the state, we had watched the governor and commissioner of health do an excellent job of dealing with Covid. The state seemed, in general, to resemble the one we had left. Gov. Shumlin's state of the state address that emphasized the opioid crisis had worried us, but everybody everywhere was worried about this.

So we bought a house in Chester and sort of picked up where we'd left off all those years ago.

Vermont isn't, however, the Vermont we left.

Oh, our new neighbors are as neighborly as our Weathersfield neighbors had been. The Chester Select Board is as reasonable and open minded as most Select Boards had been. The town road crew is fully dedicated to keeping the roads safe.

But we watched members of the Springfield school board who didn't understand critical race theory (CRT) try to ban it from the schools, while citizens who understood CRT kept the effort from passing.

Our local school board was the only one to push back on the Agency of Education's ruling that "mascots" like Chieftains weren't appropriate, though it finally did the right thing.

And the newly elected chair of the state Republican party decided to hold a "Let's Go Brandon" rally (until others convinced him it was a bad idea) while school teams (and parents) occasionally decided that taunting their opponents with racist slurs was OK.

Gun violence, often drug related, seemed a regular thing. West Pawlet's unpermitted militia training site drew national attention.

Vermont's second-highest-in-the-nation homelessness rate was unsettling, as was the state's high percentage of short-term rentals when there were so few houses or apartments on the market.

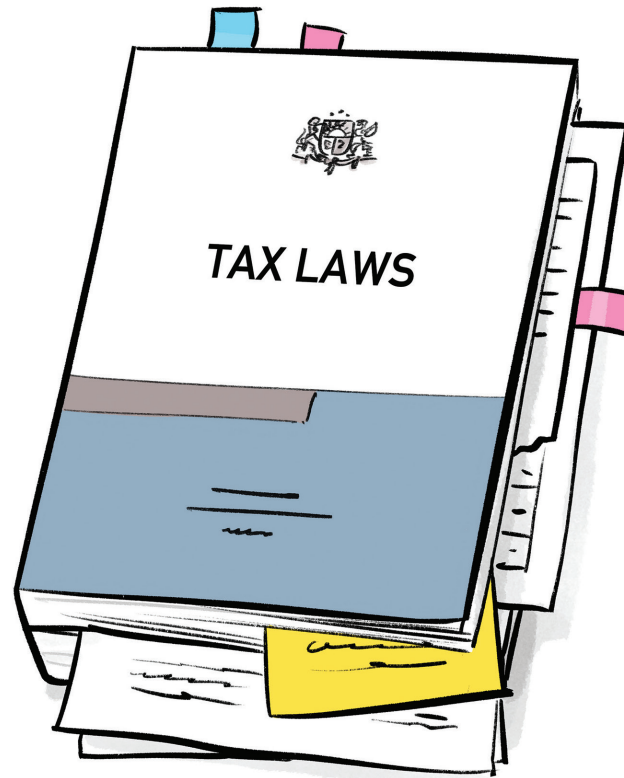
Vermont had changed, but when we told our friends in other states what Vermont was doing about everything from PFAS to the housing crisis, we still seemed to be ahead of the curve.

Not only, however, has Vermont changed. I have, too.

I noticed this when I read last fall about Elmore voters

Changes → 12

I had shifted from wanting to preserve Vermont's lovely face-to-face politics to wanting to make sure that everyone could vote.



PLAIN LANGUAGE



Gatis
Sluka
cagle.com

Plain language by Gatis Sluka, Latvijas Avize, Latvia

LETTERS

Time to pay it forward

Dear Editor,

I am the current chair of the Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU) School Board. I am also a Woodstock resident, a parent of three children who graduated from our schools, a grandparent of a PreK student at WES, and an educator who taught for 39 years in the school district. At the vote for the new school at town meeting on March 5, 2024, I will be voting "Yes."

The School Board appreciates the supportive and complimentary statements we have heard about our teachers and staff. We sincerely thank the many people who asked great questions about the new school and we have attempted to answer all questions honestly and clearly. We are convinced the best and most practical option is a new school building and we are committed to securing the funding.

For eight years, countless hours by many school board members, administrators, teachers, staff, students and the public have reviewed and refined the design. We are design and permit ready with a strong expectation of opening the doors in the fall of 2026.

After attending many meetings across our school community, most agree that a new building is necessary. Yes, a new building will be a significant investment, but it is well worth making.

Its time has now come. We are asking the taxpayers to contribute their share to help fund a building that can stand the test of time and last for 70-plus years. It will have a capacity for up to 600 students. It will be a modern building with the latest technology in air quality, heating, and lighting. It will provide teachers and students right-sized

For eight years... [we] have reviewed and refined the design.

classrooms for today's educational practices.

Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Let's provide our children and grandchildren a place to learn and improve our world. It's time to move forward and get it done.

Sincerely,
Keri Bristow, Mountain Views School District Board Chair

Affordability is a real concern

Dear Editor,

I recently attended an open meeting at the Public Safety Building where the proposed new Woodstock Middle/High School was the main topic. Ben Ford began the meeting with an overview of the location on site and the cost.

After the initial presentation, questions and concerns became the most talked about items. Concerns were about the age of the building and how many parts are wearing out. Some have even failed already. It was felt that repair costs for these areas would run up into the cost of a new building.

The one area that we all agreed upon was that the best part of the school was the teachers and the education they were providing. Even in a building in need of repair!

The meeting then moved in another direction. The cost. The cost was coming at a time when the state has required a reappraisal of the properties in the district. Primarily, Killington was the main town discussed. The state is requiring that the property values in town be in line with the state's value of the same properties. At the same time, the state is looking seriously at a significant increase in the tax rate for

education taxes.

This is where my concern comes in. If property value is raised say 25% to meet the CLA and the tax rate stays the same, it would raise 25% more money. Add to that (discussion here was 16% tax rate increase) times the increased value and that raises the rate is even higher.

I was on the School Board for 18 years. Yes, I am in favor of a good education. During that time, Act 60 went into effect. It was the first noticeable time when the state set the education rate and the majority of money had to be sent to Montpelier who then decided where the monies were to be sent to other towns and cities.

At that time my personal/home rate was increased by roughly six times, most of which went north to be redistributed. With the current plan under discussion, the amounts will be even greater. For me personally, I am a few months away from retirement at which time Social Security will be one source of income. Yes, Sheila and I have put money aside for retirement. However, depending on the new education tax rate, it likely to increase down the road, Affordability → 12

CAPITOL QUOTES

Apple recently released its Vision Pro, a virtual reality (VR) headset designed to mix the real world and the virtual world. The gadget has returned VR to the limelight. In general, virtual reality, exciting as it is, has been deemed a mixed blessing...

“I describe the metaverse as the internet on steroids,”

said **Todd Richmond**, a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) as well as the director of the Tech + Narrative Lab and a professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School in an interview with TechTarget. While the metaverse is not yet a reality, some companies, such as Decentraland, Google, Meta and Roblox, have created virtual reality platforms that experts said are precursors to a fully immersive, interconnected digital world.

“After exploring a virtual world, some people can’t shake the sense that the actual world isn’t real, either,”

wrote **Rebecca Searles** in a piece in The Atlantic titled, Virtual Reality Can Leave You With an Existential Hangover

“Research shows some health improvements associated with experiencing nature in virtual reality, although these benefits are smaller than those gained by exposure to real nature,”

wrote **Meghan Bartels**, in the Scientific American.

“Many of us have had a telephone or video consultation with a doctor or other healthcare practitioner in the last few years. Imagine putting on a VR headset and enjoying a more immersive remote consultation – whether it’s an annual check-up, a review of test results, or diagnosing a minor condition that can be diagnosed visually. VR would enable a deeper level of immersion, giving both you and the practitioner a better sense of “being there” together,”

wrote **Bernard Marr** in Forbes.

COMMENTARY

Act 127 and the goal of equity

By Brooke Olsen-Farrell

Editor’s note: Brooke Olsen-Farrell is the superintendent of the Slate Valley School District.

I am proud to serve in a state that believes it is every child’s right to receive an excellent education, regardless of their background or zip code. So, it’s been unsettling to see some using Act 127, an act meant to promote equity in our educational funding formula, as a scapegoat for school budgetary pressures that all districts are dealing with. It is hard to understand how one can support the goals of equity while also advocating for the undoing of Act 127. These are contradictory positions.

Let’s be clear: Act 127 was a necessary step to bridge the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots.” In Vermont, every child is important and deserves equal educational opportunities. However, this was not being practiced in our education funding before Act 127, as wealthy towns with ample resources were better positioned to provide their children with a better education than high-poverty, rural and more diverse districts. For example, our district, Slate Valley, has always been fiscally conservative. Our practice has been zero-based budgeting. We start each year by looking at precisely what we will need to accomplish our goals for the coming year. We budget without building in contingencies. Year after year, we return most of our prior year surplus to our taxpayers to reduce tax rates. At this time, our capital reserve account has been depleted, and we do not have any other reserve accounts. Despite this conservative approach, our budget often does not pass on the first vote, and if it does pass it is by a very slim margin.

Act 127 addresses this challenge by offering a data-driven solution to decades of underfunding of schools in Vermont’s most diverse, rural and high-poverty communities. Based on the most recent Title I poverty rate comparison data provided by the Agency of Education, Slate

Act 127 → 54

LETTERS

2024 went sideways on us

Dear future Vermont,
I’m sorry. I apologize for where you are now, it was our fault — things got strange around 2022 to 2024 and went sideways on us. Maybe if more of us had been vocal things could have turned out differently. As you consider where you are now and how to move forward perhaps a bit of context would be helpful.

Early spring of 2024 was a challenging time in Vermont. In those years, while we still had a public education system, it was being stretched to its limit and was beginning to unravel. There were funding pressures statewide, a dual system of accountability for public versus private and religious schools, a dysfunctional Agency of Education, a state board of education friendly to private schools, and a legislature that struggled with the unintended consequences of a poorly designed education funding bill. To quote half of Charles Dickens, “it was the worst of times.”

By the 2024 school year, schools throughout Vermont were dealing with unprecedented cost pressures

Sorry, Vt → 55

Write-in Scott Baughman for Sherburne Riverside Cemetery Commission

Dear Editor,

On March 5, 2024, Election Day in Killington, Scott Baughman will be a write-in candidate to fill a vacancy on the Sherburne Riverside Cemetery Commission. Scott has the full support of Truman Bate and Paul Holmes, the current members of the cemetery commission. We ask that the citizens of Killington support Scott with your write-in vote.

Scott Baughman moved to Killington in 2020 with his wife Lisa Ransom, who is the vicar and executive director at Mission Farm. Scott, a father of three grown children, also has two dogs that warmly welcome those passing by on Mission Farm Road. He previously managed mechanical operations at both the Country Club of Vermont and Stowe Country Club.

More recently, Scott owned Grow Compost of Vermont in Waterbury, Vermont. He now works on various agricultural proj-

Write-in → 12

Unfair business practice underway in Killington

Dear Editor,

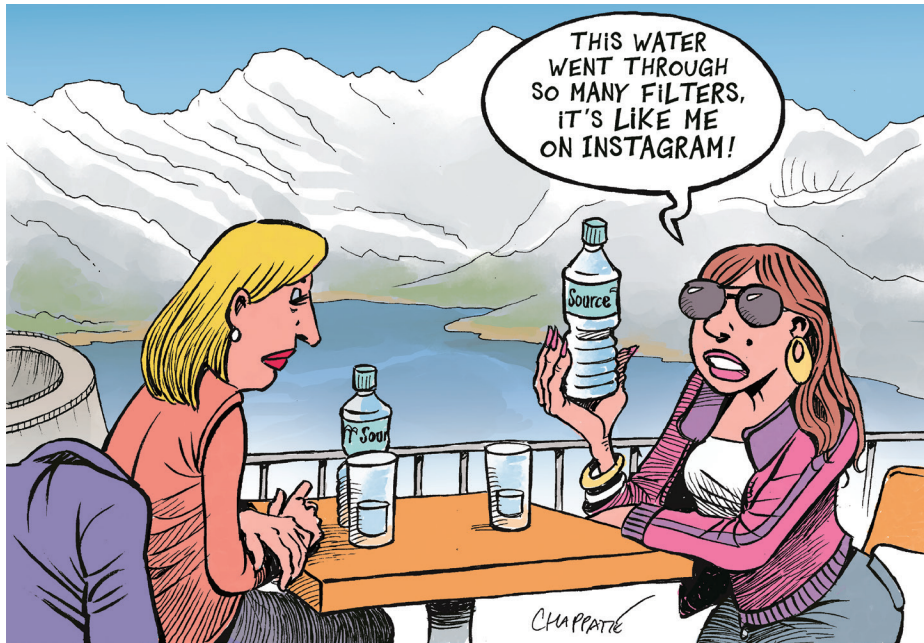
I started paying personal property tax in 2007, about \$300 that year. Now, in 2024 my personal property tax is almost \$2,200. So out of curiosity, I went to the town office and made a few copies of the list of businesses who pay personal property tax in this town. Out of over 100 businesses that have equipment, advertise and do business in this town, only 80 businesses pay personal property tax.

My intention is not to call out these businesses who were not on the list specifically, but rather understand the big picture. In the short time that I looked over these records, I found over 25 businesses that do not pay anything and that are not on that list at all. Some of my good friends own some of these businesses, so this is not personal to me, but rather an example of things not being enforced correctly in this town.

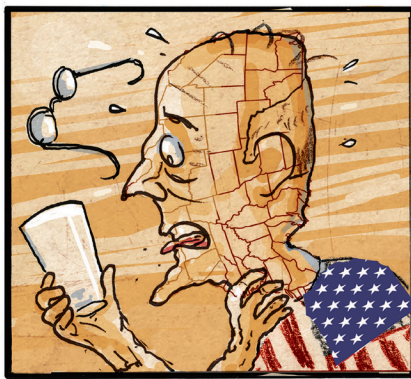
For example, in 10 years, if a business has owed \$10,000/year, that would be \$100,000 in taxes not collected that could be used

Gieda → 12

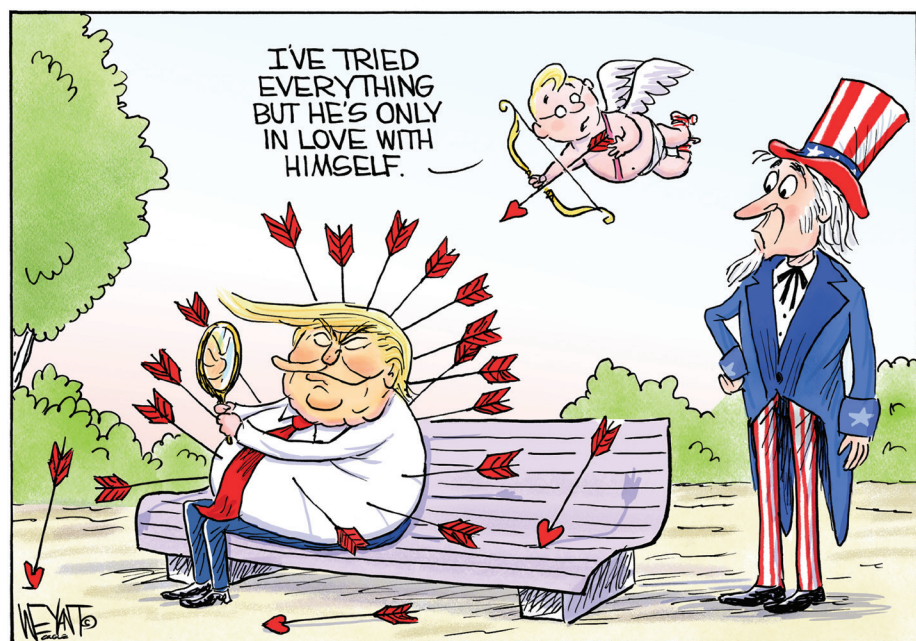
CARTOONS



How natural is your mineral water? by Patrick Chappatte, Le Temps, Switzerland



Water Supply Drying Up by Peter Kuper, PoliticalCartoon



Trump's One and Only by Christopher Weyant, CagleCartoons

LETTER

The case for paid family and medical leave

Dear Editor,
As Vermont's State Treasurer, I am dedicated to supporting the financial well-being of all Vermonters. Last year, our office's public retirement initiative, VT Saves, was unanimously approved by the Legislature, supported by the governor, and signed into law. The program will help more Vermonters access a secure retirement, benefiting our economy and taking pressure off our state budget.

This year our office is supporting a proposal to establish a Baby Bonds program in Vermont. The program would invest \$3,200 for every low-income Vermont child

Paid leave → 15

Affordability:
from page 10

there is the distinct possibility that we will need to use the "retirement" money to pay the taxes???

There is a lot going on in town these days. I would like to thank my fellow selectmen Chris Karr and Jim Haff and Town Manager Michael Ramsey for the endless meetings and seminars they have been attending to get the TIF project as well as the East Mountain Road reconstruction to where they are. The road is back in use and work has begun on the TIF with more noticeable work starting in the spring.

Stephen Finneron,
Killington Select Board member

Write-in:
from page 11

ects, supports initiatives at Mission Farm, and manages properties across the state. In his leisure time, Scott enjoys mechanical projects with his sons and watching local car races. Scott is enthusiastic about contributing to the Cemetery Commission.

Please write-in Scott Baughman for Cemetery Commissioner on the Town of Killington ballot.

Truman Bates and Paul Holmes, Killington

Changes:
from page 10

rejecting the proposal to shift from voting at Town Meeting to voting by Australian ballot. Weathersfield had dealt with this issue not long after we arrived in the mid-'80s. A major argument was that the elderly didn't want to drive at night, so I wrote an op-ed proposing running school buses to bring citizens to and from the meeting. Nobody bit.

All that remained of town meeting was an informational session, with voting by Australian ballot the next day. This change made me very sad.

But when I read, 35 years later, about Elmore's decision not to replace town meeting voting with voting in private the next day, I was even sadder. I had shifted from wanting to preserve Vermont's lovely face-to-face politics to wanting to make sure that everyone could vote — the daylong vote to put the issue on the ballot drew 40% of Elmore's voters, as opposed to the 11% who met in person to reject it.

These days when democracy — everywhere — seems to be so threatened, we should do everything we can to make sure everybody can vote.

Some things — even some excellent things — must change.

Gieda:
from page 11

for our local community projects. Any business that has equipment in this town should pay their fair portion like I do and many other local businesses do.

I am estimating the town of Killington is not collecting between \$15,000-\$25,000 in taxes each year. This is money that stays here locally and would be used for things in this town.

Killington Resort is obviously the business who pays the most and some other small businesses can pay as little as \$50. My point is that it does not only create an unfair business practice, but it also is proof that we are not running the town the way it needs to be run. How can we have a system in place where some pay and some do not.

Everybody wants to advertise and do business in Killington, keep their equipment here, but they don't want to pay for it? I sat down with the town manager and the listers six months ago and brought this to their attention. They promised to look into it. I then followed up at the

Vermont had changed, but when we told but friends in other states what Vermont was doing about everything from PFAS to the housing crisis, we still seemed to be ahead of the curve.

Select Board meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 13. When I asked the town manager the status of my concern, instead of listening to my citizen's concern, Selectman Jim Haff suggested the town audit me first. Does Killington want to be represented by someone like this? I would have thought they would have thanked me for bringing this to their attention! Instead I was attacked and in that moment realized this was the same behavior that was exhibited towards the people who came forth against the former fire chief.

I care about this community and the businesses that represent it. I would treat everybody equally and promise to listen when concerns are brought forth to the Select Board. I might not agree with you all the time, but I do promise to listen and respect you, something that I believe is missing currently. I am humbly asking you for your vote on March 5.

Thank you.
Andrew Gieda, Killington

← **Clarkson:**
from page 9

Resources Board (NRB) issued their report suggesting updates to Act 250. S.311 incorporates the report's recommendations, which will speed up housing development. However, these recommendations will take several years to map, approve, and implement. That's because each town is expected, in coordination with their Regional Planning Commission, to plan and map where in their town development and housing is wanted and feasible. Once this work is complete, we will have a statewide map, built from the ground up, which makes clear what can be developed where, which areas are exempt from Act 250 and which will require going through the Act 250 process. S.311 assumes this process will take a while and makes interim provisions for housing development. For example, we propose to exempt downtowns and village centers, which are served by water and sewer, from Act 250 for ¼ mile around their designated village centers.

The bill allocates millions of dollars to support the production of more affordable housing (rentals, renovations and home ownership), middle income home ownership, repair mobile homes and improve mobile home park infrastructure, expand the Downtown Tax Credits program, and adds to the down payment assistance for first time home buyers.

Sen. Alison Clarkson can be reached by email: aclarkson@leg.state.vt.us or by phone at the Statehouse (Tuesday-Friday) 802-828-2228 or at home (Saturday-Monday) 802-457-4627. For more information, visit: legislature.vermont.gov.

Vermont has the highest rate of second home ownership in the country — which is significantly impacting our housing crisis.

← **Harrison:**
from page 9

in the House of H.289 at \$1 billion over the next 10 years. The bill requires 100% renewable energy for electric generation by 2030. PSD's estimate includes \$500 million for the increased cost of power generation and another \$500 million for transmission infrastructure. Groups backing the renewable energy bill believe the actual cost will be much less.

- The House Ways & Means Committee continues to explore adding a surcharge on higher income families (those earning \$500,000+) as well as taxing unrealized capital gains on taxpayers with higher net worths (\$10 million+).

There is no surplus money this year.

Voters can login into the My Voter Page at: mvp.vermont.gov at the Secretary of State's office to request an absentee ballot for the upcoming town meeting and/or access information on their town ballot questions.

Unless postponed for revisions to their proposed school budget, district meetings will be held:

Mountain Views District Public Information Hearing

Thursday, Feb. 29, 6:30 p.m.
Woodstock Union Middle and High School
(zoom link available at: mtnviews.org)

Barstow Public Information Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 27, 6:30 p.m.
Barstow School, Chittenden
(zoom link available at: rnesu.org)

Jim Harrison is the state representative for Chittenden, Killington, Mendon and Pittsfield. He can be reached at JHarrison@leg.state.vt.us or harrisonforvermont.com.



TOWN OF
KILLINGTON
VERMONT

WARNING:
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING:
March 4, 2024
&
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING:
March 5, 2024

The legal voters of the Town of Killington, County of Rutland, State of Vermont are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Killington Town Office at 2706 River Road in Killington on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. to vote by Australian ballot on the following Articles.

Legal voters are further warned that a public informational hearing will take place at the Killington Public Safety Building at 800 Killington Road in Killington and via electronic means on Monday, March 4, 2024, at 7:00 P.M. For information on how to participate in this public informational hearing, please see the Public Informational Hearing Notice and Agenda posted herewith.

Article 1. To elect the following town officers:

- A moderator for a term of one year;
- A selectboard member for a term of three years;
- A lister for a term of three years;
- A cemetery commissioner for a term of three years;
- A library trustee for a term of five years;

Article 2. Shall property taxes be paid in three installments: the first due August 15, 2024, and the overdue subject to interest after August 25, 2024; the second due November 15, 2024, and overdue subject to interest after November 25, 2024; and the third due February 15, 2025, with the total tax delinquent after February 25, 2025?

Article 3. Shall the voters approve total general fund expenditures of \$7,021,304 of which an estimated \$300,000 shall be applied from the 2023 general fund balance, \$4,842,314 shall be raised by property taxes, and 1,878,990 in estimated non-property tax revenue for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024?

Article 4. Shall the Town of Killington authorize cannabis retailers and the retail portions of integrated licensee operations in the Town pursuant to 7 V.S.A §863?

Article 5. Shall the town authorize the Selectboard to perform a study on the impacts of leaving the Mountain View Supervisory Union?

Dated at Killington, Vermont this 22 day of January 2024.

Stephen Finneron

Jim Haff

Christopher Karr

← **Maternity care:**
from page 3

Hospitals designated as Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity demonstrate leadership by requiring structure and process and outcome metrics above and beyond the traditional perinatal core set. Facilities must collect race ethnicity data, have a maternal quality improvement program, and commence drills and simulations for adverse events. In addition, they must meet clinical outcome metrics at an even higher standard than the previous cycle. Specifically, the rate for low risk first time cesarean sections.

The evaluation also includes measures that are known drivers of morbidity and mortality in maternal health care. Specifically, facilities must demonstrate standardization or protocols in hemorrhage and hypertension management. These adverse events effect minority women disproportionately more so it is even more critical that facilities are also measured on these key metrics with the goal of achieving health equity.

The Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity Care Program provides new and expectant mothers access to high-quality and affordable maternity care, close to home. The result of this designation assures that designated providers are committed to protecting the health and safety of each

mother and child by using evidence-based maternal health care practices.

Designated hospitals must also maintain national accreditation.

“Rutland Regional Medical Center wom-

“This distinction is the result of our quest to continually find ways to improve what we do here every day and I couldn’t be prouder of this team,” said Leah Romine, nurse director of the Women’s and Children’s Unit and

Birthing Center at RRM.

en’s and children’s healthcare services are managed by a dedicated and experienced group of providers and support staff who share a singular focus on the health and wellbeing of both the parent and newborn,” said Leah Romine, nurse director of the Women’s and Children’s Unit and Birthing Center at RRM. “This distinction is the result of our quest to continually find ways to improve what we do here every day and I couldn’t be prouder of this team.”

Since 2006, the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program has helped patients find quality providers for their specialty care needs, while encouraging healthcare professionals to improve the care they deliver.

For more info, visit: bcbs.com/bluedistinction.



By Donald Dill

Little Mexico resturant opens in Ludlow

The grand opening of Little Mexico in the Okemo Marketplace Plaza took place recently with many Ludlow area members excited to sample delicious enchiladas, tacos, margaritas, and so much more! In addition to Mexican food and drinks the restaurant provides catering and hosts events.

For the ribbon ceremony, Owner Oscar Torres cut the ribbon with two of his team members behind him, Tim McEnaney (left) and General Manager Casey Crompton (right). Assistant Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce Director Leah Kriebel (left) and Chamber Executive Director Carol Lighthall (right) held the ribbon.



**LIGHTS.
LIFTS.
ACTION.**

**NEW LIFT, NIGHT SKIING,
AND APRÈS-SKI. GOOD TIMES
AWAIT AT THE BOWL!**

AND YEAH, WE'RE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.



snowbowl
MIDDLEBURY

middleburysnowbowl.com

← **Paid leave:**
from page 12

born on Medicaid, available to the individual at age 18-30 for wealth-building activities like buying a home in Vermont, starting or investing in a business in the state, paying for higher education or job training, or saving for retirement. The policy would provide a more comprehensive social security from cradle to grave.

However, as we strive to build a state that works for everyone, it's a harsh reality that almost 75% of Vermont workers lack access to paid family and medical leave. This leaves many Vermonters exposed and one unforeseen emergency away from financial

insecurity and potential job loss. No Vermonter should be forced to choose between a paycheck and taking care of a loved one or addressing their own health needs.

I have come to believe that establishing a comprehensive paid leave program in Vermont would not only benefit individuals and families, but the broader economy. It would ensure individuals who need to take time off remain connected to our workforce, which fosters stability and financial security for businesses, families, and workers alike. Paid family leave is a strategic investment in our state's economic future.

But the advantages of a paid leave program extend beyond financial security. Businesses can expect increased productivity and higher morale, with lower turnover rates and improved retention. This is critical given our need to expand and diversify Vermont's workforce. Paid Family Leave would also support infant health, reduce dependence on public assistance programs, and alleviate financial strain on caregivers.

Vermont has a clear plan for a practical and fair paid leave program. By distributing the costs among all businesses and workers, the burden remains manageable,

ensuring that all Vermonters can access essential benefits in times of need.

Establishing a comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy aligns with our state's values and supports our economy. Let's continue to work together to build a Vermont future where every individual can confront life's challenges with confidence and security, knowing both their job and family are safe. Let's implement a strong paid family and medical leave program and create a more resilient future for all Vermonters.

Michael Pieciak, Vermont State Treasurer

← **Q&A Killington ballot:**
from page 2

Union?" Can you explain what the study would be and what value its results would have for the town?

MR: This one is still coming together, but the general idea is that if passed, the town will hire a firm to weigh the pros and cons of leaving the MVSU. I'm not sure what impact this article will have on the passage of the school district's budget, or the school boards' push for a new middle/high school; however, I do believe the warning of the article is justified. There are less affluent and fixed-income residents in Killington who will not be able to afford to live in our community if something isn't done about education spending, and leaders must do everything possible to limit the exposure from decisions being made on the state level that are harmful to vulnerable and marginalized communities living within our town.

Vermont needs to take a holistic approach to solving the problem. This requires us to fix the housing crisis by incentivizing sustainable development, create standards for school design/build to provide more equitable opportunities across the state, and think seriously about how much infrastructure we need to give all children in Vermont a good education.



TOWN OF
KILLINGTON
VERMONT

NOTICE OF AMENDMENT TO THE FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE

On February 12, 2024, the Selectboard of the Town of Killington, Vermont, adopted amendments to the existing False Alarm Ordinance pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 59. This notice is published pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §1973 to inform the public of these amendments and of the citizens' right to petition for a vote to disapprove these amendments.

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS/ADDENDUM TO ORDINANCE

Purpose: This ordinance amendment is to clarify the roles and titles of responsible personnel and departments.

Principle Provisions:

Remove Constables and Volunteer Firefighters and replace them with Police and Firefighters
Appoint Fire Chief as administrative point of contact

FULL TEXT

The full text of the ordinance is available at the Town Clerk's Office, 2706 River Road, Killington, Vermont and may be examined during regular office hours.

CITIZENS' RIGHT TO PETITION FOR VOTE

Title 24 V.S.A. §1973 grants the citizens the right to petition for a vote at a special or annual Town Meeting to disapprove ordinance amendments adopted by the Selectboard. To exercise this right, citizens must present to the Selectboard or the Town Clerk a petition for a vote on the question of disapproving the amendments signed by not less than five percent (5%) of the Town's qualified voters. The petition must be presented within forty-four (44) days following the date of the adoption of the amendments. Unless a petition requesting a vote is filed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §1973, the amended Traffic Ordinance shall become effective sixty (60) days from the date of said adoption.

PERSON TO CONTACT

Additional information pertaining to this Ordinance may be obtained by contacting the Town Manager, Michael Ramsey at the Town Office located at 2706 River Road, Killington, Vermont, 05751 or by calling 802-422-3241 during regular office hours. This summary is posted in 5 designated locations throughout town and can be found on the town's website: www.killingtontown.com

DATE POSTED: February 21, 2024



TOWN OF
KILLINGTON
VERMONT

NOTICE OF AMENDMENT TO THE TOWN OF KILLINGTON SERVICE REIMBURSEMENT ORDINANCE

On February 12th, 2024 the Selectboard of the Town of Killington, Vermont, adopted amendments to the existing Service Reimbursement Ordinance pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Chapter 59. This notice is published pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §1973 to inform the public of these amendments and of the citizens' right to petition for a vote to disapprove these amendments.

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS/ADDENDUM TO ORDINANCE

Purpose: This ordinance amendment is to designate the Killington Fire and Rescue Service as the responding agency.

PRINCIPLE PROVISIONS:

Remove Sherburne Volunteer Fire Department and replace it with Killington Fire and Rescue Service

FULL TEXT

The full text of the ordinance is available at the Town Clerk's Office, 2706 River Road, Killington, Vermont and may be examined during regular office hours.

CITIZENS' RIGHT TO PETITION FOR VOTE

Title 24 V.S.A. §1973 grants the citizens the right to petition for a vote at a special or annual Town Meeting to disapprove ordinance amendments adopted by the Selectboard. To exercise this right, citizens must present to the Selectboard or the Town Clerk a petition for a vote on the question of disapproving the amendments signed by not less than five percent (5%) of the Town's qualified voters. The petition must be presented within forty-four (44) days following the date of the adoption of the amendments. Unless a petition requesting a vote is filed pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §1973, the amended Traffic Ordinance shall become effective sixty (60) days from the date of said adoption.

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DATE POSTED: February 21, 2024



WINDSOR CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET REPORT

The voters residing in each member district will cast their ballots on **Tuesday, March 5, 2024** in the polling places designated for their town as follows:

Barnard Town Hall located at 115 North Road, Barnard, VT
10:00AM- 7:00PM

Bridgewater Town Clerk's Office located at 45 Southgate Loop, Bridgewater, VT
8:00AM-7:00PM

Killington Town Hall located at 2706 River Road, Killington, VT
7:00AM-7:00PM

Plymouth Municipal Building located at 68 Town Office Road, Plymouth, VT
10:00AM-7:00PM

Pomfret Town Office located at 5218 Pomfret Road, North Pomfret, VT
8:00AM-7:00PM

Reading Town Hall located at 799 VT-106, Reading, VT
7:00AM-7:00PM

Woodstock Town Hall located at 31 the Green, Woodstock VT
7:00AM- 7:00PM

AUDITOR'S STATEMENT

Windsor Central Unified Union School District (a.k.a. Mountain Views School District)

The financial records are being audited by RHR Smith & Company for the year ending June 30, 2023. Copies of the completed audit, when available, may be requested by calling the Director of Finance & Operations at 802-457-1213, ext. 1089, or visit: MVSU website > About > District Finances

FY25 BUDGET:

Budget financial details will be posted on our website as documents become available.

Visit: MVSU website > About > Budget
mtnviews.org

WARNING FOR ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WINDSOR CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT a.k.a. MOUNTAIN VIEWS SCHOOL DISTRICT MARCH 5, 2024

The legal voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District, a.k.a. Mountain Views School District, comprising the voters of the Towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock, are hereby WARNED and NOTIFIED to VOTE, in accordance with H.42 of the 2023 Legislative Session and signed by the Governor on January, 25, 2023, by AUSTRALIAN BALLOT either via mail as provided by their respective Town Clerk or at their respective Town polling places hereinafter named for the above-referenced towns on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, during the polling hours noted below.

ARTICLES TO BE VOTED ON BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT- MARCH 5, 2024

ARTICLE 1: To elect a Moderator who shall assume office upon election and shall serve for a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

ARTICLE 2: To elect a Clerk who shall enter upon their duties on July 1 following their election and shall serve a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

ARTICLE 3: To elect a Treasurer who shall enter upon their duties on July 1 following their election and shall serve a term of one year or until their successor is elected and qualified.

ARTICLE 4: To fix the salary for District Treasurer in the amount of \$7,500.00 for 2024-2025.

ARTICLE 5: The legal voters of the specified towns designated within this itemized Article shall elect only their director(s) as follows:

- Barnard: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified
- Bridgewater: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified
- Killington: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified
- Pomfret: one school director to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified
- Woodstock: two school directors to assume office upon election and serve a term of three years or until their successor is elected and qualified

ARTICLE 6: Shall the voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District, a.k.a. Mountain Views School District, approve the school board to expend Twenty-Nine Million Seven Hundred Fifty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Seventy-Four and 00/100 Dollars (\$29,756,674.00), which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$16,552.00 per Long Term Weighted (LTW) equalized pupil.

ARTICLE 7: The Mountain Views School District proposes to incur bonded indebtedness for the purpose of construction of a new Union Middle/High School and to install athletic fields and related outbuildings and structures, and to demolish, remove and dispose of the existing Woodstock Union Middle/High School in Woodstock, Vermont, in an amount not to exceed \$99,000,000.

The Vermont school construction aid program has been suspended since 2007. Accordingly, State funds may not be available at the time this project is otherwise eligible to receive State school construction aid. The District is responsible for all costs incurred in connection with any borrowing by the District for the Project in anticipation of State school construction aid. To meet this responsibility while limiting impacts to district taxpayers, the district intends to use other funding sources such as Inflation Reduction Act funding for renewable energy projects and amounts raised through private fundraising.

Shall the bonds of the Mountain Views School District in an amount not to exceed \$99,000,000 be issued for the purpose of construction of a new Union Middle/High School and to install athletic fields and related outbuildings and structures, and to demolish, remove and dispose of the existing Woodstock Union Middle/High School?

Upon closing of the polls, pursuant to 16 V.S.A. §741(b)(2), the ballots will be counted by representatives of the Boards of Civil Authority of the Towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock.

The legal voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District are further notified that voter qualification and registration relative to said meeting shall be as provided in Section 706(u) of Title 16, and Chapters 43, 51 and 55 of Title 17, Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Dated this 2nd day of February 2024 in Woodstock, Vermont.

MVSU Board of Directors

Each of the seven district towns elects its own representative on the school district board of directors. Each town has two representatives, except for Woodstock which has six [due to its population which is about three times larger in population than the next biggest town in the district.] Representatives serves three-year terms.

Bridgewater Representatives

- Lara Bowers (2025); lara.bowers@mtnviews.org
- Ryan Townsend (2024); ryan.townsend@mtnviews.org

Barnard Representatives

- Bryce Sammel (2024); bryce.sammel@mtnviews.org
- Carin Ewing Park (2025); carin.park@mtnviews.org

Plymouth Representatives

- Elliot Rubin, MD (2025); elliot.rubin@mtnviews.org
- Josh Linton (2026); josh.linton@mtnviews.org

Killington Representatives

- Katie Reed (2024); katie.reed@mtnviews.org
- Anne Karl (2026); anne.karl@mtnviews.org

Reading Representatives

- Anna Sessa (2026); anna.sessa@mtnviews.org
- Adam Ameen (2025); adam.ameen@mtnviews.org

Pomfret Representatives

- Bob Crean (2024); bob.crean@mtnviews.org
- Lydia Locke (2026); lydia.locke@mtnviews.org

Woodstock Representatives

- Keri Bristow, Chair (2024); keri.bristow@mtnviews.org
- Matt Stout (2025); matthew.stout@mtnviews.org
- Sam DiNatale (2026); samantha.dinatale@mtnviews.org
- Ben Ford, V.Chair/Clerk (2025); ben.ford@mtnviews.org
- Marianne Ralph (2024); marianne.ralph@mtnviews.org
- John Williams (2026); john.williams@mtnviews.org

WINDSOR CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

a.k.a. MOUNTAIN VIEWS SCHOOL DISTRICT

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING

WARNING, NOTICE, and AGENDA FOR

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

The legal voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District, a.k.a. Mountain Views School District, comprising the voters of the Towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock, are hereby **WARNED** and **NOTIFIED** that an **INFORMATIONAL HEARING** will be held at the **Woodstock Union Middle and High School library, located in the Town of Woodstock, Vermont, on Thursday February 29, 2024, commencing at 6:30PM** to discuss the Australian ballot articles of the 2024 Annual Unified Union District Meeting Warning. Additionally, the Public Informational Hearing will be accessible through electronic means (online meeting).

Information on how to access the remote hearing:

Topic: WCUUSD/MVSD Informational Hearing
 Time: February 29, 2024 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
 Zoom Meeting ID: 893 0245 0476
 Zoom Passcode: 525685

- By computer: Join Zoom meeting at: tinyurl.com/MVSUtmZoom
You may have to create a free account or sign into your existing account. Select the option to join meeting and enter the meeting ID if prompted: 893 0245 0476 and passcode: 525685 if prompted.
- By smartphone, tablet, or other device: Download and open the Zoom app.
You may have to create a free account or sign into your existing account. Select the option to join meeting and enter the meeting ID: 893 0245 0476 and passcode: 525685 if prompted.
- By telephone: Dial: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York) or +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC). Enter the meeting ID: 893 0245 0476 and passcode: 525685 if prompted.

AGENDA FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024

- 6:30PM: Call to Order**
- 6:35PM: Additions or deletions to the agenda
 - Public comment
- 6:40PM: To hear the reports** of the School District Board of Directors
 - Public comment
- 6:45PM Review and Discuss Article 4:** To fix the salary for District Treasurer in the amount of \$7,500.00 for 2024-2025.
 - Public comment
- 6:50PM: Review and discuss Article 6:** Shall the voters of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District, a.k.a. Mountain Views School District, approve the school board to expend Twenty-Nine Million Seven Hundred Fifty-Six Thousand Six Hundred Seventy-Four and 00/100 Dollars (\$29,756,674.00), which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$16,552.00 per Long Term Weighted (LTW) equalized pupil.
 - Public comment
- 7:10PM: Review and discuss Article 7:** The Mountain Views School District proposes to incur bonded indebtedness for the purpose of construction of a new Union Middle/High School and to install athletic fields and related outbuildings and structures, and to demolish, remove and dispose of the existing Woodstock Union Middle/High School in Woodstock, Vermont, in an amount not to exceed \$99,000,000.

The Vermont school construction aid program has been suspended since 2007. Accordingly, State funds may not be available at the time this project is otherwise eligible to receive State school construction aid. The District is responsible for all costs incurred in connection with any borrowing by the District for the Project in anticipation of State school construction aid. To meet this responsibility while limiting impacts to district taxpayers, the district intends to use other funding sources such as Inflation Reduction Act funding for renewable energy projects and amounts raised through private fundraising.

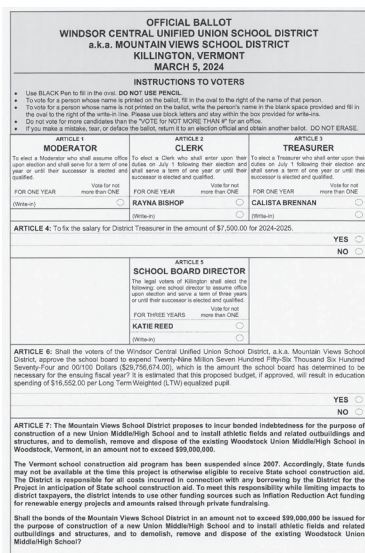
Shall the bonds of the Mountain Views School District in an amount not to exceed \$99,000,000 be issued for the purpose of construction of a new Union Middle/High School and to install athletic fields and related outbuildings and structures, and to demolish, remove and dispose of the existing Woodstock Union Middle/High School?

 - Public comment
- 7:30PM: Discussion of other non-binding business** (if applicable)
- 7:35PM: Entertain motion to adjourn hearing.**

Changes to Act 127 and its effect on town reports

This year, the state Legislature has had last minute discussion of probable Act 127 changes. This revelation on Thursday, Feb. 1, resulted in the board holding an emergency meeting on Friday, Feb. 2, to revise the proposed FY25 operating budget that will be presented to voters.

This came after MVSU had submitted all of our reports to



the towns for their town reports. Since all district towns had all gone to press with their reports, what will appear in the town reports will be different from what will appear in this publication. However, all towns were able to make the updated changes to their ballots, so the updated information will appear correctly to voters on Town Meeting Day.

District School Board Report

By Keri Bristow, Chair, MVSU Board and Ben Ford, Vice Chair, MVSU Board

In 2023, the work of the Mountain Views School District Board was focused on several key steps to enhance teaching and learning in our schools. Continuing to leverage pandemic-era ESSR funds to overcome learning loss, the district made key investments in math and reading education this year. Following intensive professional development, our math teachers created foundational agreements to advance teaching practices, engagement, high-quality instructional resources, and learning assessments. Similar investments in student literacy based on the science of reading culminated in a new 90% reading proficiency standard for the district. With historical measures around 65%, this represents an ambitious goal, but one our educators have eagerly taken on with new methods and exciting early results.

Following a district-wide assessment, the MVSU Board also approved additional administrative and educational resources at our elementary schools to address socio-emotional behavioral concerns using restorative approaches.

With voter approval of three ballot measures last spring, the Board was able to make significant progress on improving the conditions of our school buildings. A \$1.75 million project was completed to replace the roof at Killington Elementary. A \$1.2 million upgrade project was required to extend the service life of the heating system at Woodstock Union High School after losing the use of six classrooms last winter.

As the maintenance team worked steadily to keep up the MS/HS building, district voters also approved \$1.65 million for architectural services needed to complete the detailed design of the new middle and high school building. PC Construction was hired in October as the construction management firm for the project. Soon after, PCI Project Consulting were retained as owners' representatives to help complete project costing and value engineering. In December, their work resulted in \$16.5 million in cost reductions to achieve a final construction cost of \$90 million for the new building. With permitting, site work, and furnishings, voters will be asked to approve a \$99 million total project cost March 5. At a square foot price of \$569/square foot, this is among the most efficient school projects currently planned for construction in the state, with five other Vermont school buildings ranging from \$633 to \$726/square foot.

We are thankful for the commitment of fellow Board members, and of our exceptional administrators, educators, and school staff. Through all of our collective dedication to the students of our district, we have made real progress in overcoming the challenges presented by the pandemic, as well as tackling infrastructure issues long in the making. We look forward to continuing our important work together in the year to come.

Superintendent's report

By Superintendent Sherry Sousa

While we continue to feel the impact of the Covid years, we strive to return to the rituals, routines, and rhythms of previous years. Our students and their families require a level of care and compassion that previously was not needed, but now our teachers, Social Emotional Coaches, staff, administrators, and district leaders work hard to listen to their needs and address their concerns. This culture of empathy and belonging is pervasive in our school communities.

Five years ago a District Strategic Plan was crafted by parents, community members, Board representatives, students, teachers, and administrators. This year we have begun the process of creating our next five year MVSU Strategic Plan. The current Design Team, that includes all of these stakeholders, reviewed the current Portrait of a Graduate and provided feedback to make the wording more accessible and inclusive of current work and policies. The Design Team has also provided school leaders with guidance on Priority Areas and Goals. By February 2024, a draft will be presented to the Board of the Priority Areas, Goals, and Strategies for the next five years with a finalized document to share in May.

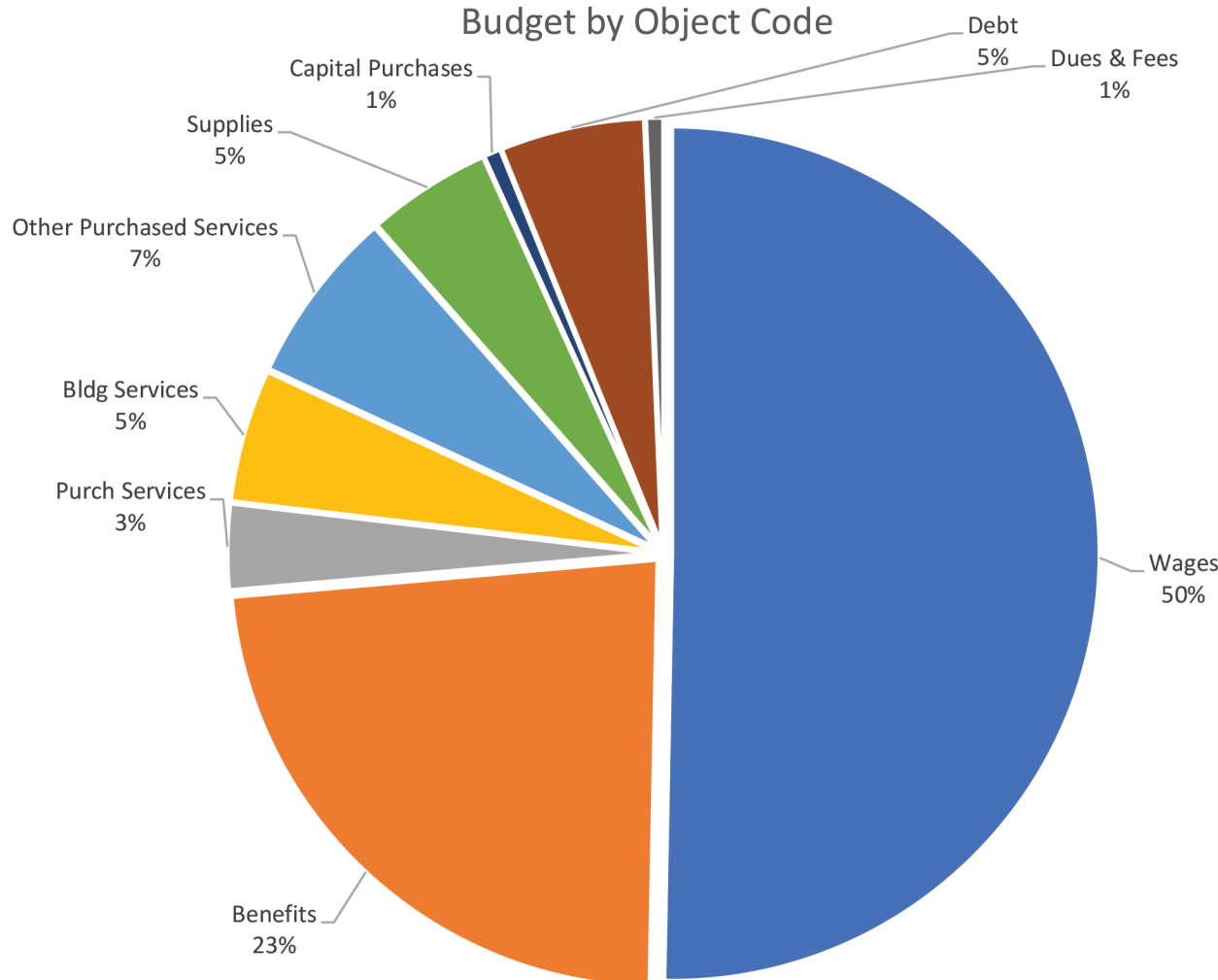
Professional growth has always been a priority for the District. Educators in the Elementary, Middle and High Schools are continuing to develop the skills necessary to meet the Literacy and Math goals for proficiency. The Unified Arts Team is looking to create integrated learning experiences that link their coursework with those of content

This year we have begun the process of creating our next five year MVSU Strategic Plan.

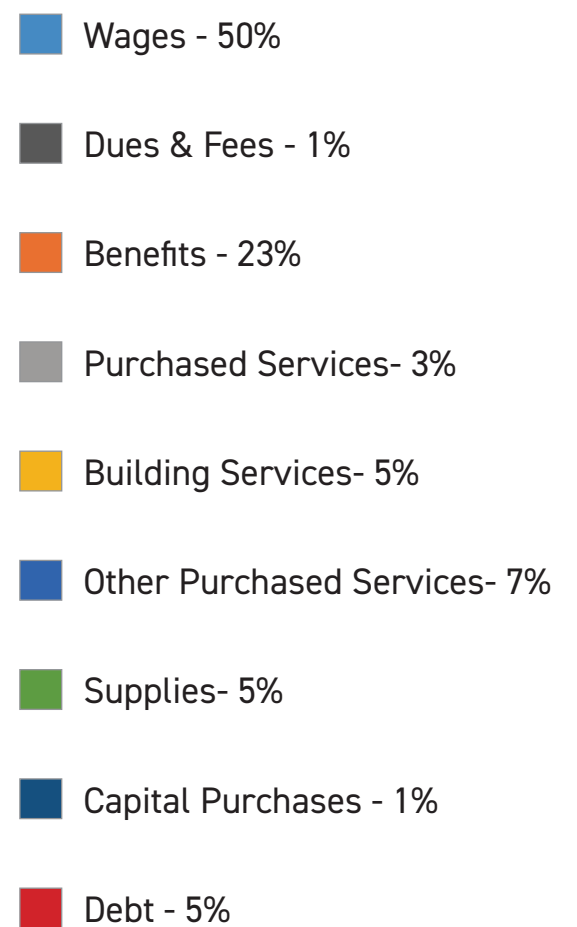
area teachers. A group of secondary teachers created rubrics and scaffolding to embed greater creativity in assessments. Principals and Directors have attended national conferences as participants and presenters.

On World Teachers Day, each teacher and staff member who has served 10, 20, or 30 years in this district received a marble or brass apple. Inscribed on the apple was a recognition of their years of work, and in the case of 20-plus year employees, the award also included their name and years of service. We have six team members who have been with us for more than 30 years. They are Jamie Gidney (BA), Jenny Hewitt (BA), Sharon Groblicki (BA), Lisa Kaija (RES), Tim Brennan (WUHS) and William Chamberlain (WUHS/MS). It was great to celebrate with the students these amazing teachers and staff members, and to finally formally recognize their contributions.

WCUUSD FY25 Budget by Object Code



WCUUSD FY25 budget by object code



Windsor Central Unified Union School District FY2025 projected revenues

	FY22 Budgeted	FY22 Actual	FY23 Budgeted	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budgeted	FY25 Budgeted
Local Revenue						
Tuition From Other LEA's	\$1,880,606	\$1,704,757	\$1,787,500	\$1,565,064	\$1,588,335	\$1,767,319
Tuition by Parent/Patron - Pre-School	\$12,525	\$7,783	\$16,000	\$13,427	\$12,000	\$9,000
Interest Earned	\$36,000	\$15,755	\$18,500	\$47,709	\$17,000	\$23,000
Rental Income	\$45,000	\$5,000	\$45,000	\$5,618	\$50,000	\$7,500
Miscellaneous Local Revenues	\$0	\$7,985	\$6,500	\$52,663	\$6,500	\$6,500
SU Services to Others	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$0
Prior Year Surplus Applied	\$211,624	\$0	\$350,000	\$0	\$300,000	\$0
Food Service Program	\$18,758	\$54,122	\$18,750	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Local Revenue	\$2,234,513	\$1,825,402	\$2,272,250	\$1,714,482	\$1,973,835	\$1,813,319
State and Federal Revenue						
Education Spending Grant	\$17,181,711	\$17,262,242	\$18,258,064	\$18,890,726	\$19,599,186	\$25,172,953
Small Schools Grant	\$149,627	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
State Transportation Reimb	\$442,798	\$217,406	\$266,978	\$266,978	\$266,978	\$266,978
State Pre-K Subsidy	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$713	\$0	\$0
Ed Fund Payment to Tech Center	\$151,202	\$176,302	\$147,557	\$148,732	\$165,000	\$148,000
Driver's Education Reimbursement	\$4,000	\$2,107	\$6,000	\$4,254	\$6,000	\$4,000
Vocational Ed Transportation	\$25,000	\$0	\$35,000	\$36,060	\$35,000	\$36,000
High School Completion Grant	\$0	\$524	\$0	\$12,190	\$0	\$0
State Food Service Program Revenues	\$8,046	\$27,955	\$9,200	\$0	\$0	\$0
Federal School Lunch Program	\$398,573	\$647,320	\$401,826	\$0	\$647,320	\$0
Total State and Federal Revenue	\$18,360,957	\$18,333,856	\$19,124,625	\$19,359,653	\$20,719,484	\$25,627,931
Special Education						
Special Ed Excess Cost Revenue	\$235,748	\$218,500	\$218,500	\$155,129	\$218,500	\$155,000
Special Ed Block Grant	\$386,789	\$386,789	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Ed Act 173 Block Grant	\$0	\$0	\$1,617,647	\$1,617,647	\$1,803,408	\$2,007,133
SPED Reimbursement - Extraordinary	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$95,795	\$0	\$0
SPED Coord charges to Pittsfield	\$0	\$9,000	\$0	\$0	\$9,000	\$9,000
Special Ed Expenditures Reimbursement	\$1,459,071	\$1,425,933	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Ed State Placed Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SPED ED Service to other LEAs	\$0	(\$208,093)	\$0	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000
Early Essential Education Grant	\$80,816	\$71,048	\$76,067	\$76,067	\$76,067	\$114,291
Total Special Education	\$2,162,424	\$1,903,177	\$1,912,214	\$1,944,638	\$2,136,975	\$2,315,424
Total Revenues	\$22,757,894	\$22,062,435	\$23,309,089	\$23,018,773	\$24,830,294	\$29,756,674

Final FY24 tax rates calculation

	<u>Barnard</u>	<u>Bridgewater</u>	<u>Killington</u>	<u>Plymouth</u>	<u>Pomfret</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Woodstock</u>
FY24 Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.5122	\$1.5122	\$1.5122	\$1.5122	\$1.5122	\$1.5122	\$1.5122
CLA	0.7637	0.8115	0.6160	0.7702	0.8215	0.8262	0.7537
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.9801	\$1.8635	\$2.4549	\$1.9634	\$1.8408	\$1.8303	\$2.0064
FY23 Homestead Prop Tax Rate	\$1.7043	\$1.7456	\$2.0020	\$1.7340	\$1.5571	\$1.5205	\$1.8671
Increase(Decrease) from FY23	\$0.2758	\$0.1179	\$0.4529	\$0.2294	\$0.2837	\$0.3098	\$0.1393
Percentage Change from FY23	16.18%	6.75%	22.62%	13.23%	18.22%	20.38%	7.46%

Final FY25 tax rates calculation

	Barnard	Bridgewater	Killington	Plymouth	Pomfret	Reading	Woodstock
FY25 Est Equalized Tax Rate	\$1.6196	\$1.6196	\$1.6196	\$1.6196	\$1.6196	\$1.6196	\$1.6196
CLA	0.6436	0.7432	0.5235	0.6225	1.0053	0.7643	0.6365
Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$2.5165	\$2.1792	\$3.0938	\$2.6018	\$1.6111	\$2.1191	\$2.5445
FY24 Homestead Property Tax Rate	\$1.9933	\$1.8759	\$2.4713	\$1.9765	\$1.4632	\$1.8425	\$2.0198
Increase (Decrease) from FY24	\$0.5232	\$0.3033	\$0.6225	\$0.6253	\$0.1479	\$0.2766	\$0.5247
Percentage Change from FY24	26.25%	16.17%	25.19%	31.64%	10.11%	15.01%	25.98%

* Note the FY25 Est Equalized Tax Rate of 1.6196 will likely be decreased by 1 cent to 1.6096 with the application of H.850

MVSU Proposed Budget FY - 2025

Function code summary

	FY24 WCUUSD Adopted Budget	FY24 WCSU Adopted Budget	FY24 Adopted Budget	FY25 MVSD Adopted Budget	FY25 MVSU Adopted Budget	FY25 Proposed Budget	Change Increase/ (Decrease)	% Change
1100 Regular Instruction Program	\$9,823,363.09	\$0.00	\$9,823,363.09	\$11,515,988.00	\$0.00	\$11,515,988.00	\$1,692,624.91	17.231%
1200 Special Education	\$0.00	\$3,037,437.00	\$3,037,437.00	\$0.00	\$3,635,378.00	\$3,635,378.00	\$597,941.00	19.686%
1300 Vocational Tuition Local	\$290,000.00	\$0.00	\$290,000.00	\$285,000.00	\$0.00	\$285,000.00	(\$5,000.00)	-1.724%
1400/1500 Co-Curricular Programs	\$508,718.00	\$0.00	\$508,718.00	\$550,383.00	\$0.00	\$550,383.00	\$41,665.00	8.190%
2100 Student Support Services	\$0.00	\$18,879.00	\$18,879.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	(\$18,879.00)	-100.000%
2120 Guidance Services	\$960,474.00	\$0.00	\$960,474.00	\$1,201,597.00	\$0.00	\$1,201,597.00	\$241,123.00	25.105%
2130 School Nurse Services	\$440,433.00	\$0.00	\$440,433.00	\$502,299.00	\$0.00	\$502,299.00	\$61,866.00	14.047%
2140 Psychological Services	\$0.00	\$184,955.00	\$184,955.00	\$0.00	\$218,447.00	\$218,447.00	\$33,492.00	18.108%
2150 Speech and Other Therapy Services	\$0.00	\$307,160.00	\$307,160.00	\$0.00	\$374,971.00	\$374,971.00	\$67,811.00	22.077%
2160 Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Visions Services	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
2190 Other Student Services	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$20,232.00	\$24,732.00	\$20,732.00	518.300%
2212 Curriculum Development	\$276,725.00	\$161,395.00	\$438,120.00	\$0.00	\$173,586.00	\$173,586.00	(\$264,534.00)	-60.379%
2213 School Leadership	\$0.00	\$27,383.00	\$27,383.00	\$617,074.00	\$22,000.00	\$639,074.00	\$611,691.00	2233.835%
2215 Teaching & Learning	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	#DIV/0!
2220 Library Services	\$411,806.00	\$0.00	\$411,806.00	\$248,509.00	\$0.00	\$248,509.00	(\$163,297.00)	-39.654%
2230 Technology Services	\$506,180.00	\$145,604.00	\$651,784.00	\$559,659.00	\$157,955.00	\$717,614.00	\$65,830.00	10.100%
2310 School Board	\$38,471.00	\$19,625.00	\$58,096.00	\$35,400.00	\$31,188.00	\$66,588.00	\$8,492.00	14.617%
2315 Legal Services	\$9,000.00	\$41,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$43,000.00	(\$7,000.00)	-14.000%
2317 Audit Services	\$0.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$0.00	\$47,500.00	\$47,500.00	\$2,500.00	5.556%
2320 Superintendent's Office	\$0.00	\$371,715.00	\$371,715.00	\$0.00	\$397,928.00	\$397,928.00	\$26,213.00	7.052%
2410 School Administration	\$1,750,070.91	\$0.00	\$1,750,070.91	\$2,092,231.00	\$0.00	\$2,092,231.00	\$342,160.09	19.551%
2420 Director of Instructional Support Services	\$0.00	\$166,270.00	\$166,270.00	\$0.00	\$320,190.00	\$320,190.00	\$153,920.00	92.572%
2495 Grant Writing	\$0.00	\$55,739.00	\$55,739.00	\$0.00	\$58,966.00	\$58,966.00	\$3,227.00	100.000%
2510 Fiscal Services	\$81,500.00	\$0.00	\$81,500.00	\$101,500.00	\$0.00	\$101,500.00	\$20,000.00	24.540%
2520 Director of Finance and Operations	\$0.00	\$475,929.00	\$475,929.00	\$0.00	\$535,461.00	\$535,461.00	\$59,532.00	12.509%
2540 Planning, Research, Development	\$9,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	(\$5,000.00)	-55.556%
2570 Human Resources	\$0.00	\$117,383.00	\$117,383.00	\$0.00	\$125,666.00	\$125,666.00	\$8,283.00	100.000%
2600 Building and Grounds	\$2,955,494.00	\$41,885.00	\$2,997,379.00	\$3,227,763.00	\$41,725.00	\$3,269,488.00	\$272,109.00	9.078%
2700 Transportation	\$683,352.00	\$99,500.00	\$782,852.00	\$787,391.00	\$90,365.00	\$877,756.00	\$94,904.00	12.123%
3100 Transfer to Food Services	\$1,052,248.00	\$0.00	\$1,052,248.00	\$200,000.00	\$0.00	\$200,000.00	(\$852,248.00)	-80.993%
4700 Building Improvements	\$399,000.00	\$0.00	\$399,000.00	\$450,000.00	\$0.00	\$450,000.00	\$51,000.00	12.782%
5000 Debt Services	\$1,103,449.00	\$0.00	\$1,103,449.00	\$1,078,822.00	\$0.00	\$1,078,822.00	(\$24,627.00)	-2.232%
5500 Sub-Grants	\$0.00	\$245,000.00	\$245,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	(\$245,000.00)	-100.000%
Total Expenses	\$21,303,284.00	\$5,561,859.00	\$ 26,865,143.00	\$ 23,473,116.00	\$6,283,558.00	\$ 29,756,674.00	\$ 2,891,531.00	10.763%

Woodstock Union HS/MS principal's report

By Principal Garon Smail

I am privileged to present a glimpse of the achievements of the students, faculty, and staff at Woodstock Union High School and Middle School. During the 2022-23 academic year, we endeavored to provide personalized, authentic, and student-driven learning experiences for 450 students in grades 7-12. Our student body comes from the seven communities within our district—Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, and Woodstock—and 14 other communities across the region. We were proud to receive recognition for our college preparation program. Our school received AP Honor Roll Silver from the College Board (one of only two Vermont schools to earn this recognition), acknowl-

edging commitment to equitable access to advanced coursework. The Advanced Placement program includes 16 classes across seven subject areas. GreatSchools.org honored the high school with a College Success Award for dedication to guiding students through successful college enrollment and transition.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Schools completed a comprehensive review of our program, including a multi-day visit as part of the decennial accreditation process. The Commission commended many aspects of our school, including “the variety of learning opportunities that are personalized, authentic, and student-driven,” “the professional culture that demonstrates a commitment to continuous

improvement,” and “the safe, positive, respectful, and inclusive culture in the school.” In addition to engaging in the accreditation process, teachers worked collaboratively to map the curriculum by subject area or program across grade levels while considering Portrait of a Graduate connections and reviewing curriculum with an equity lens.

We continued our commitment to flexible pathways and community collaboration through many partnerships, including with Artistree, AVA Art Gallery, the Green Mountain Club, Hall Art Foundation, Kiss the Cow Farm, League of Women Voters, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, NuVu Innovation School, Pentangle Arts, Thompson Senior Center, the U.S. Forest Service, and many more.

These partnerships supported numerous programs, including career exploration, job shadowing, CRAFT and C3, and arts and civics education. Vt. Senate Majority Leader Alison Clarkson, Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger '88, and elected officials from both parties from our sending towns met with social studies classes. We are grateful to the organizations and individuals who offered their time and resources to enrich our students' experiences.

More than 80% of our students participated in athletics and other extracurricular activities, showcasing excellence on and off the field. Several athletic teams, including a unified sports team, competed in state championships, securing four championship titles. The math and scholar's bowl teams won regional

and state competitions. The Yoh Theater delivered multiple remarkable performances, enriching our school community with artistic talent. The Social Action Club organized its third Leadership Summit for Social Justice, underscoring the importance of student voice and leadership. Our international travel and exchange programs returned after a three-year pandemic-induced hiatus, with 20 students traveling to Spain and France. Seventeen seniors earned the state-endorsed Seal of Biliteracy, acknowledging global competency and the ability to communicate across cultures.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the community, and we eagerly anticipate another year of achievements at Woodstock Union High School and Middle School.

MVSU enrollment report

Enrollment Report as of October 31, 2023									
Elementary School Enrollment	On-Site PreK	K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total PreK-6
Barnard Academy	11	10	8	4	8	15	5	10	71
Killington Elementary School	22	13	10	15	8	20	13	11	112
Reading Elementary School	8	4	7	4	5	6			34
The Prosper Valley School							34	42	76
Woodstock Elementary School	43	54	24	38	48	46			253
TOTAL ELEMENTARY	84	81	49	61	69	87	52	63	546
Secondary School Enrollment -WUHSMS									
Grade 7	65	MS TOTAL		WCUUSD resident students = 905 Tuition students from sending towns = 89 Act 129 VT High School Choice = 6					
Grade 8	65	130							
Grade 9	84	HS TOTAL							
Grade 10	80								
Grade 11	75								
Grade 12	85	324							
TOTAL SECONDARY	454	TOTAL ENROLLMENT							1000

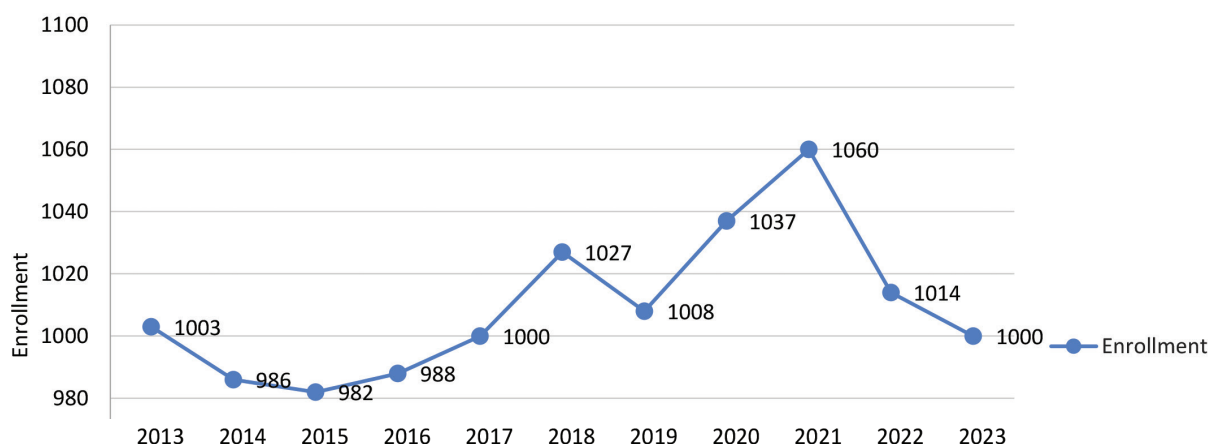


Chart shows total enrollment over the past 10 years PreK-12 grade in all Mountain View Supervisory Union schools.

The Prosper Valley School report

By Principal Aaron Cinquemani

The 2023-2024 school year ushered in continued energy and growth at The Prosper Valley School. We enthusiastically welcomed our incoming 5th grade class, bringing our total student enrollment in grades 5 and 6 to 76 students.

This year multiple new place-based learning initiatives were introduced, enabled by a generous anonymous grant received. A challenge course was constructed, presenting immersive opportunities for team building and personal growth activities. Students also benefited from a hands-on maple sugaring unit utilizing our new and improved on-campus sugaring pan, arch and stack.

Sincere gratitude is due to both The Prosper Valley School Trust and the WES/TPVS PTO for their stalwart financial assistance and community volunteer efforts, allowing our cherished learning programs to thrive. Their stalwart support for experiential learning deeply aligns with our school's vision.

In addition, the annual Harvest Supper was resurrected in 2023 after being called off due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. It was a huge success! It is always the first Saturday of October so mark your calendars now.

Finally, we are thankful for the anonymous donation of telescopes and telescope parts to our Horizons Observatory which considerably increased astronomy education access. Such a wonderful investment in the Horizons Observatory enables meaningful learning experiences for not only our students but for families, and the larger community.

Moving forward, our students and faculty will continue harnessing our unique campus resources — the observatory, greenhouse and garden, sugar shack, the challenge course and trail system — to sustain interdisciplinary education programs that engage learners in our curriculum through the local environment. We remain committed to leveraging our extraordinary human and environmental assets for the enrichment of current and future students. Go Dragons!



We love Mountain Views School District

Woodstock Elementary report

By Principal Maggie Mills

During last year's 2022-2023 school year, there were 251 PreK-4 students enrolled at Woodstock Elementary School. This year, we were thrilled to expand our PreK program yet again to include five classrooms for a total of 66 PreK students enrolled in our school. The 2023-2024 school year opened with an enrollment of 253 students in grades PreK-4. We are happy to serve the children of Bridgewater, Pomfret, Plymouth, and Woodstock as well as those attending via school choice from Barnard and Reading. Our teacher retention over the past year has been very strong, and our staff remains dedicated to our mission to provide a strong foundation and foster perseverance and belonging.

Here are some programmatic highlights from the 2022-2023 school year:

- In the fall of 2022, many teachers at WES began piloting new literacy programs with the goal of identifying a district-wide literacy program that will better meet all students' learning needs. In addition, many WES teachers engaged in a year of intensive training in best practices in literacy instruction through the LETRS program.
- All students in grade K-4 resumed taking Spanish two or three times a week. The student response to learning about Spanish language and culture has been enthusiastic.
- In October, we reintroduced the tradition of a WES Halloween Parade around the Green and were accompanied by parent musicians for a jazz/blues/funk parade.
- Our students participated in fall and winter Walk and Roll to School events sponsored by Local Motion.
- Our school librarian, Joyce Yoo Babbitt, launched a wildly popular weekly 3-minute podcast that featured student voices promoting great books.
- In December, all students in grades 1-4 were able to travel to Dartmouth College for education day at the basketball arena and attend a women's basketball game.
- In the new year, students, staff, and families participated in a Winter Wishes kindness and empathy challenge, where people were encouraged to send positive notes to one another through an inter-school mail program.
- In March, our PTO helped launch an effort to reinvigorate parent and caregiver volunteerism in the school to great results, and the PTO pulled off a successful new tradition, a spring carnival, "The Spring Fling."
- Spring also saw the renewal of our traditional in-person talent show, "Show Your Stuff," which featured the talents of students and staff on stage at the Town Hall Theater.
- Our fourth grade students rounded out their time at WES shining as members of a Shakespeare company performing Hamlet through Northern Stage's BridgeUP: Theater in the Schools program.

We are grateful for community partners such as Artistree, Billings Farm, Yoh Theater, and Pentangle Arts who graciously invite us to their programming, and more broadly we are thankful for our community's ongoing engagement with and support of our school. We are proud to be a part of this community.

Killington Elementary School report

By Principal Mary Guggenberger

The 2022-2023 school year was filled with joy in teaching and learning. Current enrollment for grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6 is 117 with students coming from within the school district and from Pittsfield.

Parents and Educators Aligned for Killington Students (PEAKS) celebrated the culmination of their mission to support the playground expansion project with the installation of the donor-recognition brick walkway from the bridge to the playground. The Grand Opening of the playground took place during an ice cream social prior to the first day of school on Aug. 28, 2023. A final opportunity to purchase a brick for the walkway was extended through the fall of 2023. Thank you to all of the contributors who participated in this fundraising event and to PEAKS for their tireless efforts in supporting a safe play place for all students at KES.

KES faculty are committed to strengthening capacity in teaching mathematics and reading. KES teachers in grades K-5 engaged in over 40 hours of intensive training in best practices in literacy instruction based on the science of reading. Likewise, KES math teachers in grades 5 and 6 joined the Woodstock middle and high school teachers to create essential agreements in teaching mathematics consistently across the district.

KES continues to support educational opportunities for learning including: instrumental music lessons and band, Four Winds Nature Program, student leadership, Starbase, Trailblazers Ski Program, writing and art contests, and PEAKS annually sponsored One School One Book. KES partners with the Town of Killington to offer a state-licensed after school program available to PreK - 6 students Monday through Friday, 3-5:30 p.m., allowing qualifying families to apply for subsidized payments for the program.

KES is extremely grateful to the entire Killington community for the dedication and support of our students. Please visit our website at: kesvt.org to find photos and newsletters to learn more about our school community.

Barnard Academy report

By Principal Melissa Zoerheide

Barnard Academy is the learning environment for 73 students currently enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6. We have multi-grade classrooms where students access high quality instruction from experienced teachers. Our faculty, staff, students, and families value being part of a community, engaging in outdoors experiences, and academic growth.

Last spring our performing arts put on a musical "A Salute to Broadway" with outstanding acting from all grade levels Kindergarten through 6th grade. This fall the performance was "A Christmas Carol" created to highlight singing and dancing from all grade levels and holiday traditions. Our STEM classes are inventive and creative hands-on activities focused on building, programming and experimenting. Our 5th and 6th grade students have traveled regularly to The Prosper Valley School to build teamwork skills on the new challenge course. Our physical education classes include gymnastics, skateboarding, skating, and many traditional sports. We have enjoyed the experience of Walk-to-School days from the town hall. We held field trips to Boston Museum of Science, VT Institute of Natural Science, Woodstock ski/snowshoeing, local hikes, Plymouth State Park, Marsh-Billings National Park, the zoo, and Bethel Fish Hatchery. We have also held a Fire Safety Day, a Band Concert, and a Field Day.

Our teaching staff in grades K-4 engaged in over 40 hours of intensive training in best practices in literacy instruction. There is enthusiasm and commitment to the highest standards of reading and math instruction. We are supported by a quality interventionist and a Social Emotional Learning teacher to provide students a multi-tiered system of support.

We welcome family and community involvement with the school in the shared commitment to all students' success. The Barnard Educational Endeavor Society (BEES) and the Barnard Education Fund continue to support our school to go further with innovative and exceptional learning experiences. Thank you for the support!

Reading Elementary School report

By Principal Brandon Hill

The Reading Elementary School experienced a year full of enriched learning opportunities for both students and staff in the 2022-2023 school year. Current enrollment for grades Pre-Kindergarten through 4th grade is 34, with students coming from multiple towns within the MVSU district and Weathersfield.

Over the course of the 2022-2023 school year, RES faculty took part in a multitude of activities that increased their skills as educators with the overall goal of benefiting student learning and growth. All RES educators participated in the LETRS program, which is an intensive training in best practices in literacy instruction based on the science of reading.

The core academics at RES are also supported with genuine experiences that connect our school to the surrounding communities. In the past year, students engaged in artist residencies with the Saint Gaudens National Historical Park sculptor, visited Sculpture Fest in Woodstock, traveled to Marsh-Bill-

ings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, and participated in hands-on learning with the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. Students have also made meaningful connections within the Reading community by partnering with a local resident to plant and harvest pumpkins behind the fire department, collaborating with the town librarian to carve pumpkins, and visiting the renowned Hall Art Foundation.

These experiences would not have been possible without the support received from the generosity of donors in our school and community. Both the Hall Art Foundation and the Reading PTO are exceptional supporters of our school. The support allows for RES students to partake in learning opportunities directed at growing as a whole.

Finally, we are grateful to parents and the larger community for their support of our students. Together, as a team, we create a safe, welcoming environment that allows all students to prosper.

WORDPLAY

TIE THE KNOT WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards

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

BAND
BETROTHED
BOUQUET
BRIDESMAID
BUFFET

CELEBRATION
CENTERPIECES
CEREMONY
CHURCH
COUPLE

DANCING
DINNER
FESTIVITIES
GUESTS
HAPPINESS

INVITATION
LIMOUSINE
MARRIAGE
OFFICIANT
RECEPTION

RINGS
SEATING
VOW
WEDDING

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SUDOKU

Solutions → 36

How to Play

Each block is divided by its own matrix of nine cells. The rule for solving Sudoku puzzles are very simple. Each row, column and block, must contain one of the numbers from "1" to "9". No number may appear more than once in any row, column, or block. When you've filled the entire grid the puzzle is solved.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Solutions → 36

CLUES ACROSS

- Golf scores
- Shock therapy
- Ballplayer's tool
- Quench one's thirst
- Female relatives of American war vets (abbr.)
- Every one of two or more things
- Member of Muslim people
- Play
- Type of cheese
- Type of lounge chair
- King Cole, musician
- Fellows
- North, Central and South
- In an early way
- Foes
- Georgia rockers
- Cryptocurrency
- Narrow path along a slope
- Disallow
- Joyousness
- Inaccessible
- Evoke emotions
- Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- Boston Celtic

- punk rockers (abbr.)
- Sword
- Actor Idris
- Affirmative (slang)
- Afflicted
- One point north of northeast
- Born of
- Arabic name
- Traumatic brain injury (abbr.)
- Extremity
- Post

CLUES DOWN

- Pacific Standard Time
- Protruding ridge on nematodes
- Indian king
- Type of milk
- One who brings home the bacon
- More comprehensible
- Connected with sense of touch
- Red mineral
- Breezed through
- Therefore
- Supplement with difficulty
- Early kingdom of Syria
- Satisfy
- They confuse doctors (abbr.)

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		

- Brass instrument
- Domesticated animal
- Ribonucleic acid
- Snakelike fish
- Woman (French)
- Economically-minded aircraft
- When you hope to get somewhere
- Tease
- Actress Gretchen
- Midway between north-east and east
- Inoffensive
- Yellowish cotton cloth
- Consume
- Does not tell the truth
- Improved something
- Spiritual leader
- Abba __, Israeli politician
- Fix
- Evergreen tree genus
- Swiss river
- Prejudice
- Major C. European river
- Long, narrow strap
- Male parent



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

Level: Intermediate

Guess Who?

I am an actress/singer born in California on February 20, 2003. I started out on television in a series based on the "American Girl" books. I moved on to Disney television, and later released my debut single about driving past a former flame's house.

Answer: Olivia Rodrigo

WEDNESDAY

2/21

Winterfest: The Great Bigfoot Chase

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Help scientists at the Rutland Free Library prove the existence of Bigfoot in downtown Rutland! Stop by the library at your registered start time to grab your expedition pack, and dress warmly for this trek through town. Follow the clues, collect evidence, and, most importantly, stay safe. Can you make it back to the lab? Register at rutlandfree.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/the-great-bigfoot-chase/

Public Skating

Wednesdays, Jan.-Feb. Union Arena, 80 Arnsden Way, Woodstock. Ages 13+ \$6; ages 4-12 \$5; ages 3 and under, free. Rental skates available, \$6/pair. 2-3 p.m. Seniors, parents with toddlers. 3-4:10 p.m. All ages. unionarena.org/public-skate-sessions/

Cribbage for Adults

3-5 p.m. Wednesdays. Hartland Public Library, 153 Route 5, Hartland. Free. Join a gathering of adult cribbage players at the library's meeting room. hartlandlibraryvt.org/calendar/ or 802-436-2473

Bone Builders

3:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Improve balance and enhance energy and wellbeing. chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356

Silent Reading Group

4 p.m. Wednesdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join us for an hour of silent reading in front of the fireplace. Foster your reading habit in a structured environment. Optional post-reading discussion. Tea, coffee, and cookies provided. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Figure Drawing with Live Model

5-7 p.m. (3rd Wednesdays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Sign up for 4 weeks at \$60 or \$20 per class. Bring own supplies. Minimum students: 4. chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356

Chaffee Book Group

5:30-6:30 p.m. (3rd Wednesdays) Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Book Group will discuss "Wherever You Go, There You Are," by Jon Kabat-Zinn. RSVP required. info@chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356.

Adult Open Gym: Coed Pickleball

7-9 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Partially punched cards from last year are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration and no leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

Young & Strange: Delusionists

7:30 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. \$50-\$66 (includes fees). Young & Strange are a comedy illusion double act by childhood friends Richard Young and Sam Strange from Oxfordshire, UK, as only the Brits can do it. They have headlined the world's largest international touring magic show, Champions of Magic. Their act features spectacular stage illusions and pyrotechnics, with comedy woven throughout. Buy tix at ci.ovationtix.com/36265/performance/11396780

THURSDAY

2/22

Killington Bone Builders

10 a.m. Thursdays. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Weights are provided. sherburnelibrary.org or 802-422-4323.

Art at the Chaffee: Artery

10:30 a.m.-noon: Thursdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Fee varies. Weekly adult group for connection and inspiration. Painting in all mediums welcome. No set topic or instructor, attendees will work on their individual artwork.

Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides at Billings

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Conditions permitting. \$5 for ages 2+. billingsfarm.org/horse-drawn-rides

Ukulele Group

Noon-1 p.m. Thursdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Ages 12+. Pre-register by Wednesday beforehand at 802-775-0356 or at chaffeeartcenter.square.site

Art at the Chaffee with Robert Black: Discussion with Robert Black.

Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$25 for both sessions; \$20 for 1 session only. 12-1 p.m. Lunch 'n' Learn: "Aren't we all 'flow-ers' in the Great Garden of Life?" How do the streaming waves and particles of air and water affect both our inner and our outer beings? Brief talk/slide presentation. Participants are encouraged to share their impressions of the topic. Participants may bring their own lunch. 1-2 p.m. Art Lab: "Aren't we all 'flow-ers' in the Great Garden of Life?" A fun, creative, hands-on activity to explore participants' expressions of the topic of the day. All materials will be provided. chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356

School Vacation Crafternoon

1-2 p.m. Fletcher Memorial Library, 88 Main St. Ludlow. Free. Ages 6+. Wondering what to do with old stubby crayons? Give them new life! Make amazing creations to take home using the library's old, used up crayons. fmlnews.org

Michelob Ultra Race World

1-3 p.m. Thursdays, to March 14. Pico Mountain: Lower Pike or Exhibition. \$50 per individual. Weekly race series at Pico featuring 8 races, where participants can race as individuals or form a team of up to 5 racers. Each race is followed by a party at the Last Run Lounge from 4-6 p.m. Register for the race series: tfaforms.com/5031843. picomountain.com

Play Bridge!

2 p.m. Thursdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Beginners are welcome to observe. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

STEAM

3-4 p.m. Thursdays. Hartland Public Library, 153 Route 5, Hartland. Free. Join us for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) craft activities. February's theme is Retro Crafts. Today's activity is friendship bracelets. hartlandlibraryvt.org.

Tubing Night at Killington

4-6 p.m. Killington Tubing Park located at the Clubhouse on East Mountain Road. A multi-lane, lift-serviced tubing experience. Attendees can enjoy special giveaways and s'mores. The Clubhouse Grill will also be open, serving pub-style entrées, warm snacks and drinks. Participants must be at least 3 feet tall. Purchase tickets for the Tubing Park online at killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/bubly-tubing-night

Ballroom Dance with Patti Panebianco

Thursdays. 1 Brennan Circle, Poultney. Sponsored by Stone Valley Arts Center, Poultney. 5-5:50 p.m. Tango & cha-cha for kids 6-6:50 p.m. Foxtrot for adults 7-7:50 p.m. Salsa for adults For details and cost, contact Patti Panebianco at 516-909-1686 or email her at pattipdance@gmail.com

Adult Open Gym: Basketball

7-9 p.m. Thursdays, Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 each time. Partially punched cards from last year are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration and no leagues. For questions contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

'Purple: A Tribute to Prince' with Craig Mitchell

7 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub, 1741 Killington Road Killington. \$15-\$20. Purple is a 7-piece (and often bigger) booty-shakin', sweaty, stinky, funky good time dance party led by frontman Craig Mitchell and an all-star cast of musicians. picklebarrelnightclub.com

FRIDAY

2/23

Pico Hiko Splitfest

8:30 a.m. Pico Ski Resort, Mendon. \$30-\$40. Interested in splitboarding? Come to Pico Hiko Splitfest to find the perfect setup, learn about backcountry safety, and try out gear from the best brands in the industry. Emcee Events, Pico Mountain, and Vermont Adaptive have teamed up for this affordable opportunity to test and buy splitboarding equipment. Register before it sells out: tinyurl.com/46cvm7z4 or visit: picomountain.com

Story Time at the Library

10:30-11:30 a.m. Fridays. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. sherburnelibrary.org, 802-422-9765 or 802-422-4251.

Bone Builders

11 a.m. Fridays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. 802-775-0356

School Vacation Movie Matinee

1 p.m. Fletcher Memorial Library, 88 Main St. Ludlow. Free. We will show a 2023 released-to-DVD film, "Trolls Band Together," about a group of colorful, music-loving creatures with wild hair, who embark on an adventure to rescue a kidnapped family member and make a surprising discovery. Snacks provided. fmlnews.org/youth

Winterfest: Painting Bigfoot

1:30-4 p.m. Teen Bigfoot painting 5:30-7:30 p.m. Bigfoot painting Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$10. Come paint Bigfoot as part of Rutland's Winterfest. Attendees follow along with an instructor and leave with a finished acrylic painting. chaffeeartcenter.org or 802-775-0356

Torchlight Snowshoe at Billings

4:30 -6:30 p.m. Billings Farm and Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Nonmember adults, \$12; member adults \$5; nonmember children under 4, free; member children under 16, free. Snowshoe, ski or walk the Billings Farm trail by torchlight. Meet National Park Rangers and learn about local wildlife and history. Firepit, complimentary s'mores and hot drinks. Snowshoes may be available to borrow. billingsfarm.org/torchlight-snowshoe

Friday Night Piano

5-10 p.m. Fridays. Main Street Museum, 58 Bridge St., White River Junction. Free. Snacks around the firepit to the music produced by piano rolls from the 1900s through the present — and from ABBA to Led Zeppelin. 802-356-2776

Blue Cat Music Series: Des & Jim Gilmour

6-9 p.m. Fridays through March 22. Blue Cat Bistro, 575 Main St., Castleton. No cover. Bluesy, contemporary folk music with expressive vocals and potent songwriting of this duo combined with their harmonies are appreciated by audiences everywhere. 802-468-2791

Wobbly Barn: Big Bang Baby

6 p.m. Performing both Friday and Saturday night. 2229 Killington Road, Killington. Cover charge may be required. Big Bang Baby is a high-energy, larger-than-life rock experience. killington.com

The Robert Cray Band: 'Groovin' 50 Years'

7:30 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Tickets: \$40-70. A unique groove, born from a love of Soul, R&B, Gospel, Blues and Rock 'n' Roll. paramountvt.org

SATURDAY

2/24

Pico: Mini-Shred Madness

9-11:45 a.m. Registration: 2nd floor of the Pico Base Lodge, Pico Ski Resort. \$20. The event is open to two divisions: Super Grom for kids aged 9 and under, and Grom for kids aged 10-13. Participants must wear a helmet and inspect the course before the event. The schedule includes practice, athletes' meeting, and two sessions for each division. The event concludes with awards. killington.com

Alabaster Carving Workshop

9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. The Carving Studio and Sculpture Center, 636 Marble St., West Rutland. \$196 for Saturday only or \$350 for both days. The workshop will focus on direct carving and three-dimensional thinking. Beginners and experienced sculptors are guided through the process of shaping a form using traditional tools. Instructor: Nora Valdez. Book a class at carvingstudio.org/products/carving-alabaster-winter



Magic of Maple at Billings

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Admission: adults \$10-\$17; children ages 3 and under free. Watch the sap run, learn Vermont's maple story. Sample fresh-made maple syrup and "sugar on snow," warm up at the firepit, make your own syrup jug, stories, maple recipes, and more. Last day Sunday Feb. 25. billingsfarm.org

The Vermont Winter Farmers' Market

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Howe Center, Suite 92, 1 Scale Ave. (off Strongs Avenue), Rutland. Free. The Vermont Farmers' Market is one of the largest farmers' markets in the state and the first to operate year round. Find seasonal harvest, winter veggies, handcrafted gifts and more. vtfarmersmarket.org

Winter Wildlife Celebration

10-4 p.m. Vermont Institute of Natural Science Nature Center, 149 Natures Way, Quechee. Included with general admission, vinsweb.org/visit/. Celebrate winter encounters with live reindeer, the chickadee feeding station, winter games, live bird i.d., raptors, "A Midwinter Night's Dream" story and more. Trails are not maintained in winter; wear boots or snowshoes are available. vinsweb.org or 802-359-5000

Art at the Chaffee: Make & Take Kids' Class

10:30-11:30 a.m. Saturdays. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Ages: 6-12. Weekly fun activity featuring arts and crafts. \$15. Min 5 students. Must pre-register. chaffeeartcenter.square.site or 802-775-0356

Art at the Chaffee: Pour Painting Chain Pull**Technique for Kids**

11 a.m. 4th Saturday. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$30. Instructor: Lorie Amerio Manieri. Follow along with an instructor and leave with a finished painting. To preregister: chaffeeartcenter.org/adult-classes-coming-soon/or call 802-775-0356

Rutland Railway Museum & Model Club

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday. 79 Depot Lane, Center Rutland. Free. Maintained by the Rutland Railway Association, Inc., the historic depot is now a museum that houses an operating HO scale model railroad setup and displays hundreds of rare or antique model trains, photographs, signs and memorabilia saved from an earlier time, including the former Rutland Railroad Caboose #45. rutlandrailway.org

Art at the Chaffee: Drop 'N' Paint

Noon-2 p.m. Saturday. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$25 per person, instructor fee optional. All ages. Supplies and images to paint are provided. Must pre-register by Friday noon. chaffeeartcenter.org/adult-classes-coming-soon/

Winterfest: Wintertastic Storytime, Bookmark Craft

2:30-4 p.m. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Ages 1 to 4. Hosted by the Rutland County Parent Child Center's parent advisory committee with a free storybook to take home for Winterfest 2024. rutlandfree.org/calendar-events/

Winterfest: Winter Dance for Loved Ones and Little Ones

4 p.m. ONE Church, 71 Williams St., Rutland. \$15 per couple (one adult, one child). Join Wonderfeet Kids' Museum at ONE Church in Rutland for our annual winter dance. DJ Brett Myhre will be on hand to get the party going and make sure that everyone has a great time out on the dance floor! wonderfeetkidsmuseum.org/events/winter-dance-for-loved-ones-and-little-ones

Catholic Mass at Our Lady of the Mountains

4:30 p.m. Saturdays. The "little white church," 4173 US-4, Killington. Free. 802-457-2322 or info@vermontcatholic.org

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike

6-8 p.m. Ice House parking lot, Jackson Gore, Okemo Resort. Free. Meet for a guided snowshoe hike with local guide Joe Karl. Bring your own snowshoes or rent in downtown Ludlow. okemo.com

Chris Bakriges Concert

6 p.m. Castle Hill Resort and Spa, 152 Castle Hill Drive, Cavendish. \$25. Enjoy an evening of acoustic jazz fusion with pianist and composer Chris Bakriges, leader of the Clear and Present Ensemble and the Matisse Jazz Project. His music blends jazz, global, blues, and chamber influences. "Feast your senses..." (Global Jazz Media) tinyurl.com/3au7vbt

Wobbly Barn: Big Bang Baby

Nightclub opens at 6 p.m. Nightclub opens. 2229 Killington Rd, Killington. Live rock experience with Big Bang Baby, a high-energy, larger-than-life rock experience. Big Bang Baby always delivers a real rock show! Cover charge may be required. killington.com

6th Annual 'Real Rutland Feud'

7 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Tickets: \$30, \$35 + tax/fees. The "Real Rutland Feud" is a live show based on the TV game show "Family Feud." Ten teams from local businesses and organizations compete for the Real Rutland Feud trophy and raise funds for the Real Rutland Marketing Initiative. Teams include Casella Real Estate, Xfinity, Maple Leaf Clinic, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Killington Resort, Honda Key, Heritage Family Credit Union, M&T Bank, Come Alive Outside, and Rutland County Pride. paramountvt.org

SUNDAY
2/25**St. James Episcopal Church 3rd Annual Online****Auction**

9 a.m. Feb. 25 to March 10. The auction features over 100 items including gift certificates, dinner parties, antiques, handmade items, jewelry, and more. 100% of proceeds benefit the church outreach committee, who organizes support for many local needs and well beyond. Visit 32auctions.com/stjames2024 to view and bid on the items.

Alabaster Carving Workshop

9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. The Carving Studio and Sculpture Center, 636 Marble St., West Rutland. \$196 for Saturday only or \$350 for both days. The workshop will focus on direct carving and three-dimensional thinking. Beginners and experienced sculptors are guided through the process of shaping a form using traditional tools. Instructor: Nora Valdez. Book a class at carvingstudio.org/products/carving-alabaster-winter

Clay Leprechaun Houses

9:30-11 a.m. The MINT, 112 Quality Ln., Rutland. \$50 for members, \$75 for not-yet members. Kids and families are invited to join a pottery workshop to create leprechaun houses. The workshop will cover slab building, scoring and slipping, and texture tools. Ages 3-5 must be accompanied by an adult or responsible teen, while ages 6-11 can participate on their own. All materials are included in the fee. Instructors are Tiffany and Caitlin. rutlandmint.org

Magic of Maple at Billings

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Admission: adults \$10-\$17; children ages 3 and under free. Watch the sap run, learn Vermont's maple story. Sample fresh-made maple syrup and "sugar on snow," warm up at the firepit, make your own syrup jug, stories, maple recipes, and more. Last day. billingsfarm.org

Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides at Billings

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Road, Woodstock. Conditions permitting. \$5 for ages 2+. Last day. billingsfarm.org/horse-drawn-rides

Improv Workshop

10-11:30 a.m. West Rutland Town Hall, 35 Marble St., West Rutland. \$16 drop-in, \$32 for 2 sessions or \$45 for all 3 sessions. Erika Schmidt offers an improvisation workshop for dancers, actors and musicians as practice and a tool for composition.

Shred with Red

1-3 p.m. Red's Backyard at Ramshead, Killington Ski Resort. Free event. Join Olympic Gold Medalist Red Gerard for an afternoon hike session, complimentary s'mores, and a chance to win prizes. Don't miss your chance to ride alongside Red and potentially win a Burton snowboard signed by Red himself. killington.com

Snowshoe Outing

2-4 p.m. Gifford Woods State Park. \$10 suggested donation. Join the Greater Killington Women's Club for a fun snowshoe outing. There will be an optional tailgate party following the excursion. RSVP: tinyurl.com/4u7cdfxcA

Science Book Club

7 p.m. Shrewsbury Library, 98 Town Hill Rd, Cuttingsville. Free. Join the science book club at Shrewsbury Library for a night of engaging discussions and exploration of scientific literature. shrewsburylibrary492@gmail.com or 802-492-3410

Adult Open Gym: Pickleball

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

'Giselle' Ballet Performance

7 p.m. Chandler Arts Center, 71 N. Main St., Randolph. \$30-\$65 for adults. "Giselle" is a classical ballet that tells the legend of the Wilis, the spirits of maidens who died after being betrayed by their lovers. Unable to withstand the betrayal, their spirits take revenge. A masterpiece of the ballet repertoire, "Giselle" will be performed by the prime dancers from the National Opera and Ballet of Ukraine. Tix at app.arts-people.com/index.php?show=22081. chandler-arts.org or 802-728-9878

MONDAY
2/26**Killington Bone Builders**

10 a.m. Weekly. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Weights are provided. sherburnelibrary.org or 802-422-4323

Okemo Innkeepers Race Series

10 a.m. Mondays, Jan. 8.- Mar. 11 Okemo Ski Resort. A Ludlow tradition. Teams and individual skiers and snowboarders compete in eight age categories. There is an après race gathering hosted by a local bar from 5-7 p.m. okemoracing@gmail.com.

Monday Movie

1 p.m. The Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Please call the library for the title of the film. sherburnelibrary.org, 802 422-9765

Poetry Group

4-5:30 p.m. 1st and 3rd Mondays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join the poetry group at NWPL for sharing and critique in a workshop format, focusing on different elements of poetry such as theme, language, sound and rhythm, structure, and context. This group is open to all interested in poetry and offers feedback on poems. RSVP: normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

TUESDAY
2/27**Play Chess & Backgammon!**

5 p.m. Tuesdays. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Join us for chess and/or backgammon on Tuesday evenings. All skill levels are welcome, and coaching is available. Bring your own set or use one of ours. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

Peggy Brightman: Artist Reception & Poetry Reading

5 p.m. Norman Williams Public Library, Mezzanine Gallery, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free and open to the public. Join us for this closing reception and poetry reading by Peggy Brightman, author of "The Dance of Image & Word," who explores the relationships among different artistic media like dance, music, photography, sculpture and poetry. normanwilliams.org

Read Between the Lines

6-7:30. 4th Tuesdays. Hybrid. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. A fiction discussion group. The novel is "West with Giraffes" by Lynda Rutledge. Facilitated by Donna Steed. Register at programs@normanwilliams.org.

'Paint Outside the Lines'

6-8:30 p.m. North Star Lodge & Resort, 78 Weathervane Drive, Killington. \$40. Join Lauren Teton of Arty Party for a paint 'n' sip party and create two framed abstracts. Food and drink available for purchase. All levels are welcome. Tickets: tinyurl.com/2rt5s6z7

Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Runs Jan. 8-Mar. 17. Killington Elementary School, 686 School House Road, Killington. Buy a 10-visit punch card for \$20 or pay \$5 for every time you come. Punch cards from last year with holes not yet punched, are still valid. Enjoy coed team sports in a low-key environment for ages 16 & up. This is a drop-in program, no preregistration or leagues. For questions please contact Griffin Van Niel at recadmin@killingtontown.com

Discount Skate Night

7:45-9:15 p.m. Tuesdays until March 12. Giorgetti Arena, 2 Oak St. Ext., Rutland. \$2 admission, \$2 skate rental.

Birding for Beginners

5:30 p.m. Virtual. Tuesdays (Feb. 27, March 26, and April 23). Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Natures Way, Quechee. Single class: \$15 general public; \$12 VINS members. All 3 classes: \$39 general public; \$30 VINS members. No materials are required. These workshops are designed for beginner to intermediate birders and are open to all ages. Follow-up materials will be provided for those interested in sharing them with young birders. Register to receive the link to these virtual events on Zoom. vinsweb.org

Robert Cray to play Paramount

By Dave Gil de Rubio, Last Word Features

Friday, Feb. 23 at 7:30 p.m. — RUTLAND— The Robert Cray Band: Groovin' 50 Years Tour will stop at the Paramount Theatre in downtown Rutland this Friday.

If ever an artist firmly stood at the intersection of rhythm and blues it's Robert Cray. While the Georgia native has earned numerous accolades (and quite a number of Grammys) for his acumen as a blues artist, Cray's vocal and playing style is far more reflective of his deep and abiding love of soul music.

So it goes with his latest album, "That's What I Heard." While this collection features its share of original numbers penned by Cray, there is a number of more obscure R&B covers the 69-year-old was inspired to record by longtime friend Steve Jordan, who reunited with Cray to play drums and produce this set.

"We once again had the opportunity to work with Steve Jordan, which is always a good thing," Cray said in a phone interview. "So we started talking about songs and he told me about ["Groove & Grind: Rare Soul"] this CD he said I should order, which is what I did. It's a compilation of old R&B tunes, from which we got two songs for this record. We got 'My Baby Likes to Boogaloo' and another one called 'Do It,'" Cray recalled in a phone interview. "Upon hearing the first track on that compilation, which is 'My Baby Likes to Boogaloo,' I called Steve up and told him I had to do that song. He said he knew it and that he was going to play drums on it. That kind of set us in the mood. We started looking at tunes after that. Steve came up with the idea of maybe doing a gospel tune, so I went to the record pile and came up with the Sensational Nightingales song, 'Burying Ground.' The band started putting songs together and I started thinking of other covers and Curtis Mayfield and Bobby 'Blue' Bland came up. That's how it came about. But Steve always sets the mood."

For this album, Cray and Jordan did a deep dive, with the aforementioned "Boogaloo" and the 1971 Bill Sha-Rae's "Do It" representing hard-edged funk with an added bonus being the six-string contributions of guest guitarist Ray Parker Jr. (who played in Sha-Rae's band as a teenager) lending some grit to the proceedings. ("We were all in the control room watching this cat work and he was hitting it hard," Cray shared.) Elsewhere, "Burying Ground" is a nod to Sundays from Cray's youth, when his parents reserved the stereo for spinning numerous gospel records.

As someone who inherited the blues elder statesman mantle from idols like Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and Albert Collins, all of whom Cray had played with years ago, he sees this blending of sounds as part of the evolution of the blues that's been occurring in the past few decades.

"There's all kinds of stuff going on. There are a whole lot of younger cats playing guitar and coming out. There are people playing acoustic-style blues and there are a whole lot of female singers now, which is great," Cray said. "I spoke with someone earlier today and we mentioned the fact that the music is changing, be-

cause it's supposed to. It's incorporating a lot of other genres mixed into it, which it's supposed to, because nobody is an Albert Collins, John Lee Hooker, Albert King or anybody like that. It's a whole new world now and I'm glad people are picking up on the old and putting their own stamp on that and adding their own thing to it. It's good."

Cray's own musical journey had him playing piano as a child. That is, until he caught The Beatles on the "Ed Sullivan Show." He switched to guitar at 12 and spent his teen years growing up in Tacoma, Washington. While playing the West Coast college circuit and collaborating with fellow blues artist Curtis Salgado in the Cray-Hawks, Cray got cast as an uncredited bass player in Otis Day and the Knights, the house band in the 1978 film "Animal House." By the 1980s, he'd built his reputation as a live artist in Europe and the United States, eventually finding crossover success with "Strong Persuader," his 1986 major label debut that yielded the hit single "Smokin' Gun." Over time, he's shared stages with Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and Stevie Ray Vaughan, all while compiling quite a canon of his own. Over time, he's seen quite a good bit of change in the music industry.

"You don't get all that support you used to get from the record companies. That seems to be gone, where you had these big family-type situations. It's a big change. You hope you can sell something online that more people might get ahold of," he said.

That said, the approach to playing live music hasn't changed and he still enjoys it immensely. So much so that Cray continues to maintain an extensive tour schedule each year.

"We go out and have fun—that's what it's all about. We change the set list up every night, with the exception of a few tunes that we (almost always) do," Cray said. "In the end, the reason that you're on the stage is that [fans] like what you do. They don't tell you that, but you're on the stage because they like what you do. So what you should do is do what you do and love what you do."

The show starts at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$40-\$70. For more info visit: Paramountvt.org/event/the-robert-cray-band.



Robert Cray

Submitted

[MUSIC Scene]

By DJ Dave Hoffenberg
Have a music scene coming up? Email djdavehoff@gmail.com

WED 2/21

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Sammy B

6 p.m. Rivershed – Rhys Chalmers

6 p.m. The Foundry – Scott Forrest

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Nick Bredice

LONDONDERRY
2 p.m. Magic Mountain's Black Line Tavern – Nick Bredice

LUDLOW
6 p.m. Off the Rails – Learn to Line Dance

QUECHEE
6 p.m. Public House Pub – Chris Pallutto

SOUTH POMFRET
6:30 p.m. Artistree – Acoustic Music Jam with Kerry Rosenthal

THURS 2/22

BARNARD
5:30 Fable Farm – Rumney Barn Sessions with Avi Salloway, Corey Wilhelm & Rpb Morse

BRANDON
5:30 p.m. Red Clover Ale Company – Open Mic hosted by Emily Nelson

CHESTER
6 p.m. The Pizza Stone VT – Nate Outer Style Martel

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Alex Shier

2 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Daniel Brown

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Chris Pallutto

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Open Mic hosted by Grateful Gary

6 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. The Freerider – Nick Bredice

6 p.m. Rivershed – Chris Pallutto

6 p.m. The Foundry – Liz Reedy

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Mike Brown

7 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Purple: A Tribute to Prince

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jenny & Friends

LONDONDERRY
7 p.m. New American Grill – Open Mic Night hosted by DJ Jazzy Joel & Catnip John

LUDLOW
2 p.m. Okemo's The Bull – All Request Apres-Ski with DJ Dave
6:30 p.m. The Killarney – Irish Sessions with Gypsy Reel

QUECHEE
6:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Trivia with Questionable Company

RUTLAND
8 p.m. Angler Pub – A Sound Space Open Mic hosted by George Nostrand

8 p.m. Center Street Alley – Karaoke 101 hosted by Tenacious T

SOUTH POMFRET
6:30 p.m. Artistree – Acoustic Jam Session hosted by Kerry Rosenthal

FRI 2/23

CASTLETON
6 p.m. Blue Cat Bistro – Des & Jim Gilmour

CHESTER
6 p.m. The Pizza Stone VT – Swing Low

KILLINGTON
1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge – Duane Carleton
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Alex Shier & Chris Pallutto

2 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Nick Bredice & Rhys Chalmers

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Daniel Brown & Chazz Canney

4 p.m. The Foundry – Jamie's Junk Show

6 p.m. Rivershed – Kevin Herchen

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Nick Bredice

7 p.m. The Foundry – Aaron Audet

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Curragh's Fancy

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Never in Vegas

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jamie's Junk Show

9 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Last Chair Band

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Big Bang Baby

LUDLOW
8:30 p.m. Off the Rails – Rustie Bus

QUECHEE
5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Bobby Sheehan

SAT 2/24

BRIDGEWATER
8 p.m. Woolen Mill Comedy Club – Comedy Night with Headliner Rob Cantrell

CHESTER
6 p.m. The Pizza Stone VT – Sammy B

KILLINGTON
1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge – Alex Shier

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Chris P Trio

2 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Dnaiel Brown

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Kenny Mehler Trio

5 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Jamie's Junk Show

6 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. Preston's at the Grand Hotel – Alex Shier

6 p.m. Rivershed – Kevin Herchen

6 p.m. Wobbly Barn – KGB

6:30 p.m. O'Dwyers Pub – County Down

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Ray Boston

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

7:30 p.m. McGrath's Irish Pub – Curragh's Fancy

8 p.m. Northstar Lodge Lounge – All Request Dance Party with DJ Dave

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – Never in Vegas

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Aaron Audet Band

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – Big Bang Baby

10 p.m. Pickle Barrel Crows Nest – Jamie's Junk Show

LUDLOW
9 a.m. Okemo's Sunburst Six Bubble – 90's Themed Lift Party with DJ Dave

2 p.m. Apres Afternoons at Clock Tower – 90's Theme with C White Duo

2 p.m. Apres Afternoon at Jackson Gore – 90's Theme with Jester Jigs

2 p.m. Okemo's The Bull – 90's Dance Party with DJ Dave
7 p.m. The Killarney – Nick Bredice

QUECHEE
5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – George Nostrand

RANDOLPH
7:30 p.m. Underground Listening Room – Robbery, Kennedy Park, Burn Kit and Violet Crimes

RUTLAND
8 p.m. Center Street Alley – Karaoke hosted by Tenacious T

STOCKBRIDGE
7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington & Tuff Luv

SUN 2/25

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS
3 p.m. Long Trail Brewery – Nick Bredice

KILLINGTON

12 p.m. Rivershed – Brunch with Kevin Herchen

1 p.m. Pico's Last Run Lounge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Alex Shier

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Rhys Chalmers

5 p.m. The Foundry – Jazz Night with the Summit Pond Quartet

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Tee Boneicus Jones

6 p.m. Rivershed – Trivia

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Open Mic hosted by Indigenous Entertainment

9 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Jenny Porter

STOCKBRIDGE
7:30 p.m. Wild Fern – Rick Redington's Looping Mayhem

MON 2/26

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Chris Pallutto

5:30 p.m. Mary Lou's – BAK'n

6 p.m. Rivershed – Mandatory Mondays with Name That Tune Bingo by DJ Dave

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Sammy B

LUDLOW
8:30 p.m. The Killarney – Open Mic Night with Indigenous Entertainment

TUES 2/27

KILLINGTON
2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Sammy B

5 :30 p.m. Mary Lou's – Bow Thayer & Krishna Guthrie

6 p.m. Rivershed – Nick Bredice

8 p.m. Jax Food & Games – Taco Tuesday with Rick Webb

LONDONDERRY
6:30 p.m. New American Grill – Trivia hosted by Zach Yakaitis

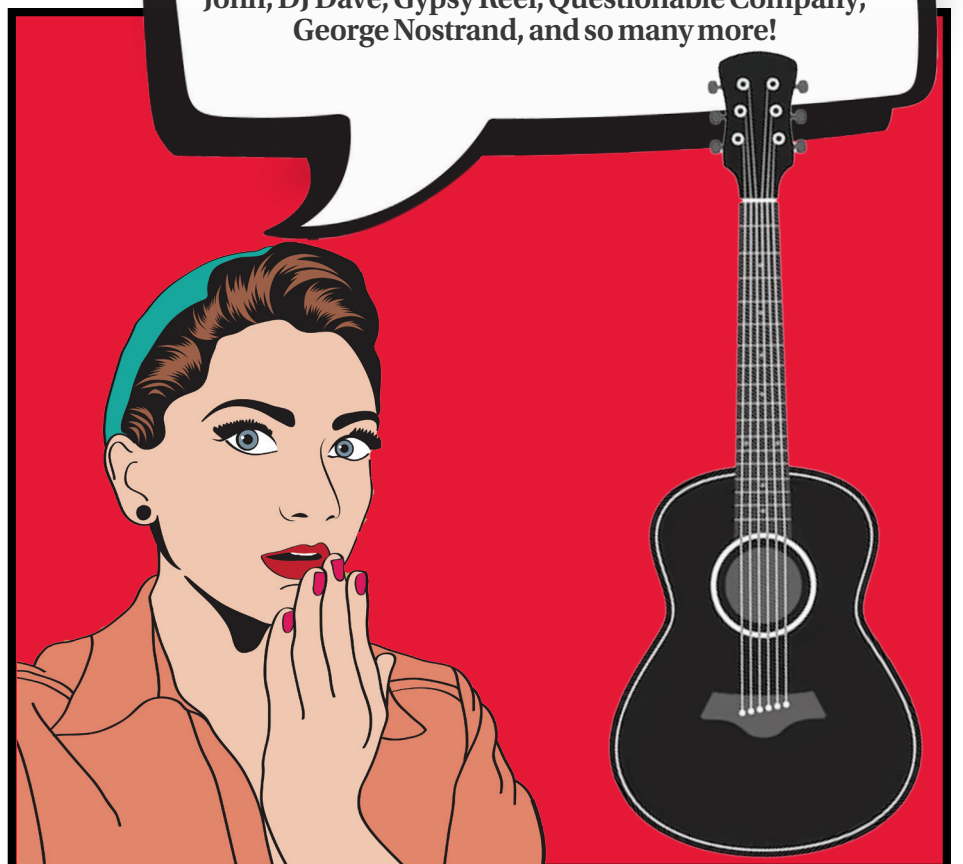
LUDLOW
6 p.m. The Killarney – Trivia with Rick Davis

QUECHEE
5 p.m. The Public House – Jim Yeager

RUTLAND
8:30 p.m. Center Street Alley – Acoustic Open Mic hosted by Josh LaFave

JUST LOOK AT THIS LINE-UP OF INCREDIBLE LOCAL MUSICIANS!!!

Sammy B, Rhys Chalmers, Scott Forrest, Nick Bredice, Chris Pallutto, Kerry Rosenthal, Avi Salloway, Corey Wilhelm, Rpb Morse, Emily Nelson, Nate Outer Style Martel, Alex Shier, Daniel Brown, Duane Carleton, Liz Reedy, Mike Brown, Purple (A Tribute to Prince), Jenny & Friends, DJ Jazzy Joel & Catnip John, DJ Dave, Gypsy Reel, Questionable Company, George Nostrand, and so many more!



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COME ALIVE OUTSIDE Rutland WINTERFEST

FEB 16-25 2024

FRI, FEB 16

LOVE LETTERS TO TOWN
ONGOING- PINECONE ADVENTURE FOREST
PINE HILL PARK

COST: FREE
Presented by: Come Alive Outside

MAKE YOUR OWN SHIELD WORKSHOP
4:00-6:00 PM | THE MINT POP-UP STORE
COST: FREE
Presented by: The Mint

BLACK LIGHT NERF BATTLE PIZZA DANCE PARTY WITH DJ BRETT MYHRE
6:00-8:00 PM | WONDERFEET KIDS' MUSEUM
COST: FREE
Presented by: Come Alive Outside, Partners for Prevention & Green Mountain Approach

SAT, FEB 17

FOOD TOUR WITH VERMONT FARMERS MARKET
DROP IN FROM 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
COST: \$40 (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Vermont Farmers Market

SNOW SCULPTING COMPETITION
10:00 AM-2:00 PM | MAIN STREET PARK
COST: FREE
Presented by: Carpenter & Costin

CHILI COOK-OFF
12:00-2:00 PM | MAIN STREET PARK
COST: FREE
Presented by: Cairo Shriners

TEEN CHILL-ZONE WITH DJ BRETT MYHRE
10:00 AM-2:00 PM | MAIN STREET PARK
COST: FREE
Presented by: Come Alive Outside

WINTERFEST STORY WALK
ONGOING | PHOENIX BOOKS
Presented by: Phoenix Books and Downtown Rutland Partnership

OWLS OF VERMONT
PRESENTED WITH THE SOUTHERN VERMONT NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
2:00-3:00 PM | PHOENIX BOOKS
COST: FREE
Presented by: Phoenix Books and the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum

WINTERTASTIC STORYTIME & BOOKMARK CRAFT DAY
2:30-4:00 PM | RUTLAND FREE LIBRARY
COST: FREE
Presented by: Rutland County Parent Child Center

SPONSORS

BIG SNOW SPONSORS



SNOWMAN SPONSOR



SNOWBALL SPONSORS



FRIENDS OF WINTERFEST SPONSORS



This event is partially funded by the Region 2 VPLO state grant through the Vermont Department of Health, Division of Substance Use.

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Casella Waste
Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR)
Downtown Rutland Partnership Heritage
Family Credit Union
Chaffee Art Center
Rutland County Parent Child Center
The Paper Poet
Farm & Wilderness
The Mint
Green Mountain Approach
The Vermont Farmers Market
Rutland Free Library
Partners for Prevention

Carpenter & Costin
Cairo Shriners
ONE Church
The Paramount Theatre
Rutland County Pride
Wonderfeet Kids' Museum
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont
Phoenix Books
Rutland Recreation
Southern Vermont Natural History Museum
Thicket Adventure
Marble Valley Kitchen
Joel Flewelling
Lisa Frankel-Boerner

SUN, FEB. 18

"A SINGLE CANDLE CAN LIGHT THOUSANDS": A COMMUNITY VOW RENEWAL WRITING WORKSHOP & CEREMONY
1:00-3:00 PM | TACONIC LOUNGE AT THE HUB CO-WORKING SPACE
COST: \$30/COUPLE OR \$20/INDIVIDUAL
SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Come Alive Outside and The Paper Poet

G.O.A.T. (GET OUTSIDE ALL TOGETHER) HIKE AT PINE HILL PARK
10:00 AM-12:00 PM | PINE HILL PARK
COST: FREE
Ages 5-18 & their caregivers
Presented by: Farm & Wilderness

MON, FEB. 19

WINTER SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR KIDS WITH SURVIVOR MAN JOEL FLEWELLING
11:00 AM-1:00 PM | PINE HILL PARK
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Ages 10+
Presented by: Come Alive Outside

TEEN DINING CLUB
5:30-7:00 PM | MARBLE VALLEY CATERING
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Come Alive Outside and Marble Valley Catering

VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENT
6:00-8:00 PM | BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Come Alive Outside, Boys and Girls Club, Partners for Prevention and Green Mountain Approach

TUES, FEB. 20

PJS AT THE PARAMOUNT
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
COST: FREE
Presented by: Heritage Family Credit Union

WINTERTASTIC STORYTIME & BOOKMARK CRAFT DAY
11:30 AM-1:00 PM | RUTLAND FREE LIBRARY
Presented by: Rutland County Parent Child Center

TEEN ROCK CLIMBING
1:00-3:00 PM | GREEN MOUNTAIN CLIMBING
COST: FREE (PRE-REG)
Presented by: Come Alive Outside

WINTERFEST CENTER STREET NIGHT SLEDDING
5:30-8:00 PM | CENTER STREET
Presented by: Casella Construction, Casella Waste, Rutland Recreation, Rutland Public Works

COLOR AWAY YOUR WINTER BLUES
2:00-4:00 PM | RUTLAND COUNTY PRIDE CENTER
COST: FREE | SNACKS PROVIDED
Presented by: Rutland County Pride

WED, FEB. 21

THE GREAT BIGFOOT CHASE
10:00 AM-4:00 PM
RUTLAND FREE LIBRARY
(PRE-REG. REQUIRED SUGGESTED)
Presented by: Partners for Prevention and Rutland Free Library

WONDERFEET WEDNESDAY
10:00 AM-4:00 PM | WONDERFEET KIDS MUSEUM
Presented by: BlueCross and BlueShield of Vermont

TEEN DINING CLUB
5:30-7:00 PM | MARBLE VALLEY CATERING
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Come Alive Outside and Marble Valley Catering

THURS, FEB. 22

LGBTQ+ FRIENDS AND ALLIES CAMP COOKING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM
CENTER STREET MARKETPLACE PARK
COST: FREE
Presented by: Farm & Wilderness and Come Alive Outside

HUMAN FOOSBALL
KIDS OPEN PLAY 1:00-2:00 PM
TEEN TOURNAMENT 2:30-5:00 PM
ADULT TOURNAMENT 5:30-8:30 PM
CENTER STREET MARKETPLACE
COST: FREE FOR KIDS, TEENS & SPECTATORS. \$50 TO REGISTER AN ADULT TEAM. TEEN TEAMS MUST ALSO REGISTER BUT THERE IS NO CHARGE.
Presented by: Come Alive Outside and Carpenter & Costin

FRI, FEB. 23

TEEN BIGFOOT PAINTING AT THE CHAFFEE ART CENTER
1:30-4:00 PM | CHAFFEE ART CENTER
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED) | INCLUDES SNACKS
Presented by: Chaffee Art Center

BIGFOOT PAINTING AT THE CHAFFEE ART CENTER
5:30-7:30 PM ADULTS | CHAFFEE ART CENTER
COST: \$10 PER PERSON (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Chaffee Art Center

MINDFUL BODY INCLUSIVE SNOWSHOE
3:00-5:00 PM | AITKEN STATE PARK
COST: FREE (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Rutland County Pride Center, Come Alive Outside, and Thicket Adventure

FREE SKATE WITH BIGFOOT
6:30-7:30 PM | GIORGETTI ARENA
COST: FREE
Presented by: Partners for Prevention, Come Alive Outside & Green Mountain Approach

FIERCE FRIDAY PRESENTS: WINTERFEST DRAG SHOW
8:00-11:00 PM | RUTLAND ELKS LODGE
COST: \$25 (TICKETS REQUIRED)
Presented by: Rutland County Pride

SAT, FEB. 24

FOOD TOUR WITH VERMONT FARMERS MARKET
DROP IN FROM 10:00AM-2:00PM
COST: \$40 (PRE-REG. REQUIRED)
Presented by: Vermont Farmers Market Prepared Food Vendors

LOVED ONES AND LITTLE ONES WINTER DANCE
4:00-6:00 PM | ONE CHURCH RUTLAND
COST: \$15 PER PAIR (ONE ADULT, ONE CHILD)
Presented by: ONE Church Rutland and Wonderfeet Kids Museum

REAL RUTLAND FEUD
7:00-9:00 PM | PARAMOUNT THEATRE
COST: \$30 (TICKETS REQUIRED)
Presented by: Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR)

SUN, FEB. 25

MAKING YOUR MAGICAL SELF
1:00-4:00 PM | MEET AT DEPOT PARK
COST: FREE
Presented by: Come Alive Outside

Teen (12-18)
A Waking Rutland Experience. Interact with magical Rutland Winterfest characters and collect special giveaways.



For complete event information visit:

COMEALIVEOUTSIDE.COM/WINTERFEST @ComeAliveOutside

Totally tubular!

Prepare for to brave the elements with family fun and adventure at the Killington Tubing Park

Thursday, Feb. 22 at 4 p.m.—KILLINGTON—Get ready for an exhilarating winter adventure as the Killington Tubing Park at the Clubhouse Grill opens its doors for a special night of tubing and family fun from 4-6 p.m. Located at 227 East Mountain Road, Killington, the Tubing Park promises an unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages.

Killington and bubly will host an evening of family fun with free samples of bubly seltzer (while supplies last), special giveaway items, and the chance to indulge in delicious s'mores. The Tubing Park, situated at the Clubhouse on East Mountain Road, just across from the Killington Grand Resort Hotel, offers multi-lane, lift-serviced tubing.

While the giveaways are complimentary, tubing tickets must be purchased in advance online to participate in the Tubing Park. Rates include Tubing Park access, tube rental, lift service, and applicable taxes. Please note that all tubing participants must be at least 3 feet tall.

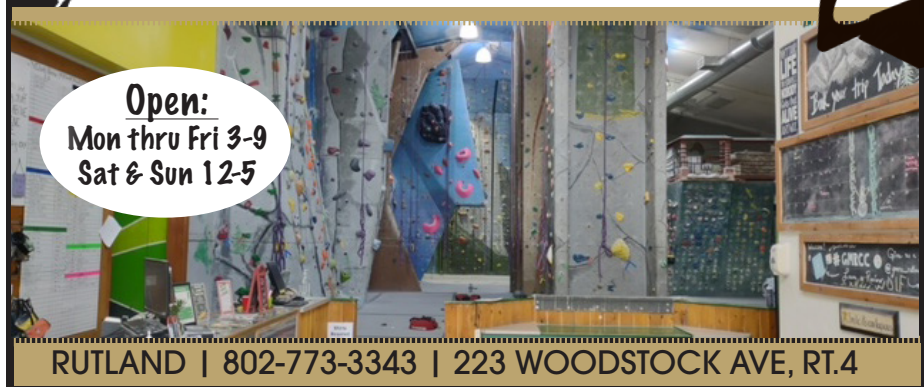
Looking to warm up after an exhilarating tubing session? Step inside the Clubhouse Grill, and enjoy a variety of pub-style entrees, kid-friendly treats, hearty snacks, and warm beverages to round out the evening.

For more information and to purchase tubing tickets, visit: killington.com



Courtesy Killington Resort

Killington Tubing Park offers family winter adventures with multi-lane, lift-serviced tubing, free samples of bubly seltzer, giveaway items, and s'mores, available for purchase online.



Courtesy Killington Resort

Big Bang Baby will perform at The Wobbly Barn Friday and Saturday, delivering a high-energy rock experience. The bands tour spans from Killington, to Ocean City, Maryland.



Courtesy Big Bang Baby

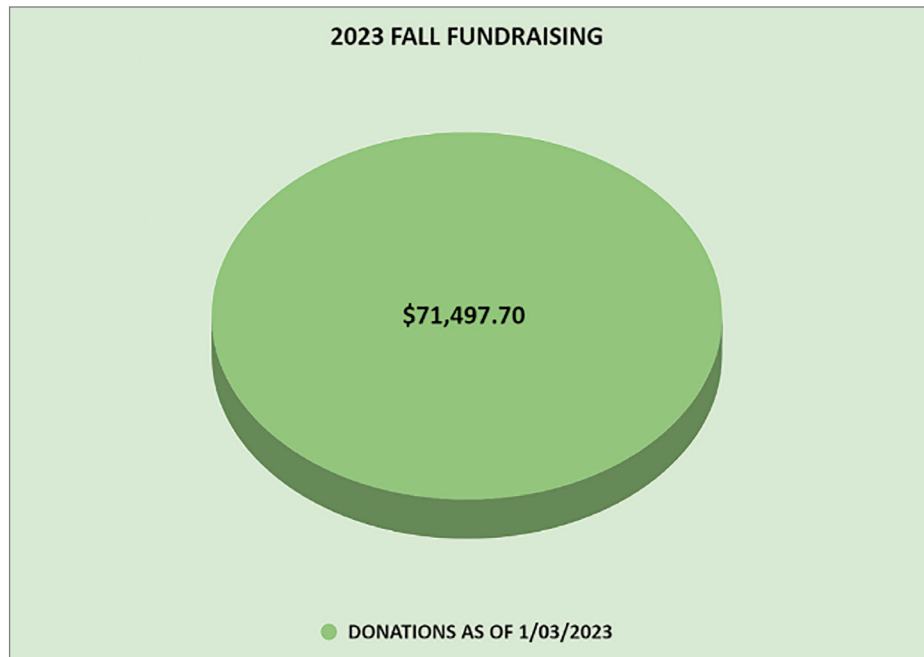
High-energy rock band Big Bang Baby to perform 2 nights live at The Wobbly Barn

Friday, Feb. 23 and Saturday, Feb. 24—KILLINGTON—Prepare for an electrifying rock experience as Big Bang Baby takes the stage at The Wobbly Barn, 2229 Killington Road, Killington for two nights of music and entertainment. Renowned for their larger-than-life performances, Big Bang Baby has captivated audiences from the ski slopes of Killington to the beaches of Ocean City, Maryland.

The Wobbly Barn Steakhouse will open its doors at 4 p.m., followed by the Wobbly Barn Nightclub at 6 p.m. The featured act, Big Bang Baby, will take the stage as the late-night performance.

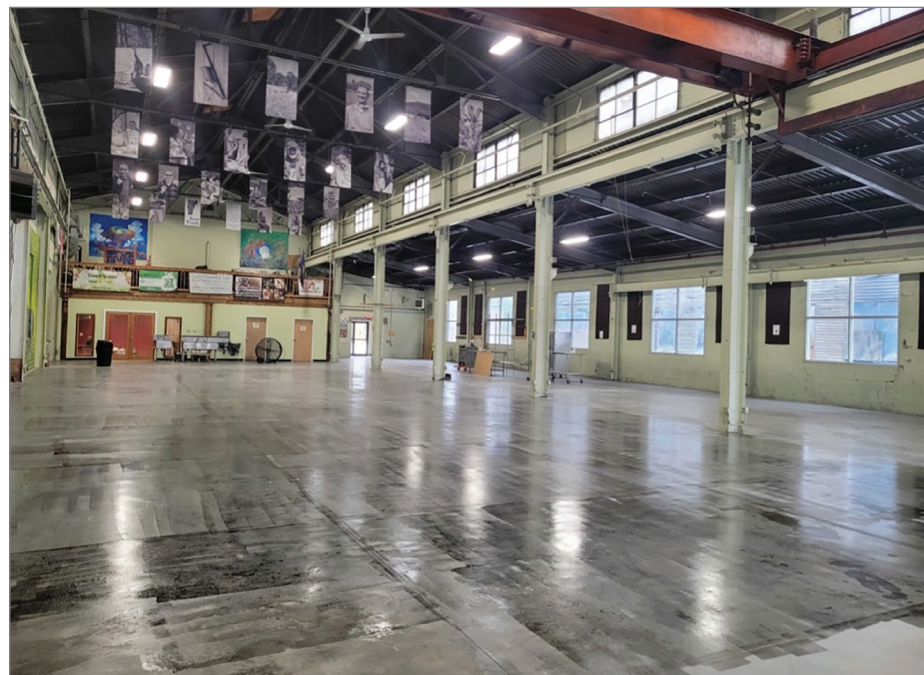
A cover charge may be required for entry to the nightclub.

For more information, visit: killington.com/things-to-do/dining-apres/wobbly-barn.



Courtesy VFFC

The Vermont Farmers' Food Center has raised \$70,000 for renovations in Farmers Hall.



Courtesy VFFC

With the \$70,000 raised by VFFC, progress has been made in the renovation process, including the installation of a new concrete floor in Farmers Hall. The next step is sealing the concrete, installing carpentry finishings, and resetting raised doorways.

Vermont Farmers' Food Center Surpasses Fundraising Goal, Advances Renovation Efforts

RUTLAND—The Vermont Farmers Food Center (VFFC) is thrilled to announce the successful conclusion of its recent fundraising campaign, marking a significant milestone as the organization moves forward with its renovation efforts in 2024. Thanks to the overwhelming support and generosity of our community, VFFC not only reached but exceeded its ambitious \$70,000 fundraising goal.

As part of the ongoing renovation process, significant progress has been made, including the installation of a new concrete floor in Farmers' Hall. With this milestone accomplished, the focus now shifts to completing additional detailed work, such as sealing the concrete, installing carpentry finishings, resetting raised doorways, and reinstalling plumbing infrastructure. These steps pave the way for further enhancements and renovations within the Farmers' Hall, aligning with a vision for growth and expansion.

In recognition of the community's tremendous support, VFFC will be expressing appreciation by gifting a locally made pie to one of our valued newsletter subscribers.

The VFFC family commemorates the life and legacy of beloved board member, Mary Hickey, who recently passed away.

7th Annual Pico Hiko Splitfest: Your Ultimate Splitboarding Experience

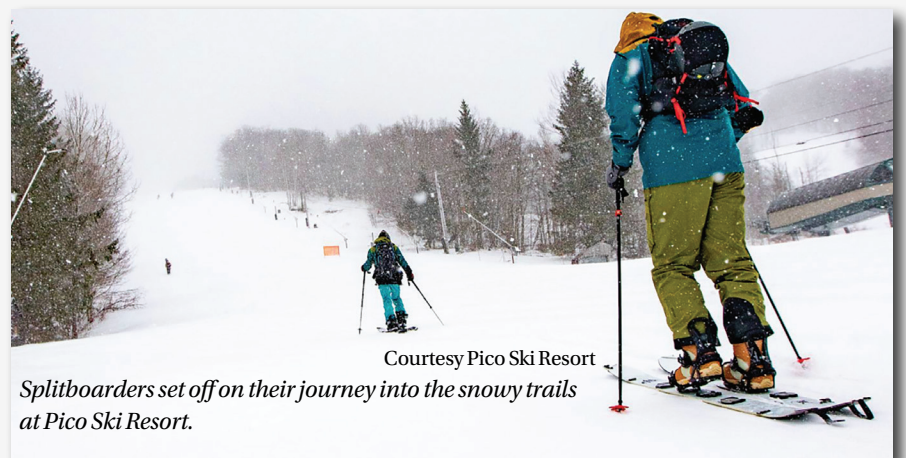
Friday, Feb. 23 at 8:30 a.m.—MENDON—The 7th annual Pico Hiko Splitfest splitboarding exhibition is coming to Pico this Friday. It will provide education, and exploration into the world of splitboarding for those who are interested in learning. The event provides an opportunity for those who want to learn more about safe access to the backcountry, while providing information for anyone looking for the perfect setup.

Splitboarding is a winter sport that combines elements of snowboarding and backcountry skiing. Splitboarders use a specialized snowboard that splits into two separate ski-like parts for uphill travel, akin to skis. When ascending a slope, the splitboarder attaches climbing skins to the bottom of each splitboard half to provide traction. Once they reach the desired location, they reassemble the splitboard into its snowboard form for downhill riding. Splitboarding allows riders to access remote backcountry terrain for untouched powder and adventurous descents while enjoying the freedom and thrill of snowboarding.

From first-timers to seasoned split vets, this event promises guidance to help interested splitboarders find the finest quality big-mountain freeride shred tools, avalanche safety equipment, layering and even backcountry mapping insights!

Emgee Events, Pico Mountain, and Vermont Adaptive have teamed up to bring together the best brands in the industry for participants to ride in the perfect testing environment. Splitboarding is a big, long-term investment.

Bring your boots, helmet, goggles and outerwear and let the exhibitors do the rest.



Courtesy Pico Ski Resort

Splitboarders set off on their journey into the snowy trails at Pico Ski Resort.



Courtesy Pico Ski Resort

The 7th annual Pico Hiko Splitfest exhibition, on Friday, Feb. 23, will explore splitboarding, a winter sport combining snowboarding and backcountry skiing. Partnered with Emgee Events, Pico Mountain, and Vermont Adaptive.

Stafford Tech sugaring program expands

By Julia Purdy

It doesn't get more local than this. On a late-winter weekend, Sugar & Spice Restaurant in Mendon is hopping. Tables are full in mid-morning and the kitchen is hard at work. Walt and Lynn Manney, owners, are both working alongside their help, who are bustling about. Walt is the greeter; he gives every person coming in the door a warm welcome. There are many handshakes and slaps on the back as the local regulars come and go, while Lynn takes a breather from the kitchen to catch up on the news with a father and daughter having breakfast at the counter.

The restaurant is unique, even for Rutland County. Clad with weathered barn board on the outside and featuring exposed beams and frame on the inside, the building evokes a traditional sugaring house – which it actually is. The rooftop vent structure is not just for show: three levels below it, the core of the building is a working, old-time sugaring operation, complete with a wood-fired boiler and steaming tanks of sap.

On a recent Saturday morning, Walt Manney shared with the Mountain Times an exciting new project. This year, Sugar & Spice will team up with the Stafford Technical Center to do the sugaring.

Mike Stannard is the instructor in Forestry & Natural Resources at the trade school, which shares the Rutland Senior High School campus down the road. Stannard does hands-on work in the field with the students, helping to select trees, drilling tap holes, coordinating the activity and providing guidance.

A resident of Fair Haven, Stannard began as the forestry instructor at Stafford a year ago, coming from a position as the Rutland High School science teacher, where he specialized in teaching earth science to the freshman class. There, he had helped build a sugaring program.

The forestry program as a whole teaches forest management from the perspective of managing for specific end goals such as establishing and maintaining a sugarbush, preserving habitat and environment, or supplying markets for wood products.

The program tapped 60 or 70 trees for several years and operated a temporary sugaring house with donated, small-scale equipment until this year, when the program was donated a larger evaporator, accommodating more sap and therefore requiring more taps, Stannard explained. With the new arrangement, "We are a 268-tap operation this year," he said.

How did this collaboration come about? "It was completely serendipitous," Stannard said. He said he needed to find a sugaring house closer to the school. The school sugaring program has 100 taps on the wooded hillside behind the RSHS campus, and Stannard was looking around for more trees to place another 200 taps. Sugar & Spice could use more helpers to do the boiling. In a neighborly collaboration, Stafford students will tap Sugar & Spice's trees for the sap, then reciprocate by doing the boiling at Sugar & Spice on Saturdays and Sundays between school breaks. Sugar & Spice will pay the student sugarmakers, who will also earn academic credit for Work-Based Learning.

Clear, subtly sweet maple sap is already dripping into bright green plastic buckets on the hillside behind Sugar & Spice. The sap will be lugged to the students' sugaring house, but, Stannard said, next year they will install sap lines to run the sap to gathering tanks on-site, as already happens at the school sugarbush.

This year, Stannard has 13 students, nine of whom are new to the program. One young woman is currently doing her co-op internship with the Rutland City forester. "The forestry program brings students in for different reasons but they leave all having the same experiences and skills," Stannard said. Students can go on to Paul Smiths, a highly regarded forestry school in upstate New York, and to Syracuse University for graduate work. Many become arborists, scientists or game wardens, or work for conservation organizations, he said.

Sugaring is not all the forestry program students do. They help manage the Rutland town forest above Mendon Brook at Journey's End and along the Wheelerville Road. They help the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service with its sapling tree sale with every year in April, preparing the saplings for sale to the public. "We also adopted the first section of the Appalachian Trail where it branches off the Long Trail near Deer Leap," Stannard said; they maintain it under the supervision of the Green Mountain Club. The program also partners with The Nature Conservancy and Smokey House in Danby, and helped build raised beds at the Vermont Farmers' Food Center in Rutland.

When asked how the students like the program, Stannard replied, "I have not seen students more excited for anything than this sugaring project."

Braden, Bobby and Grady paused to share their thoughts with the Mountain Times. Braden said he really enjoys helping out the community this way and feels he is learning great skills. Bobby is brand new to Vermont, out of New York City and has never done anything like this; his future plans include conservation biology and he says this is excellent preparation for that, getting to know the woods and nature. Grady lives out in the country and has a family sugarbush but is deepening his knowledge of the sugaring process, learning the biology of the trees and what they need. Braden added that the students go on field trips that show them the end products of the forestry/timber industry.

So who gets the syrup? In past years the quantity was so low "it wasn't worth trying to sell it," Stannard said. It was sent home with the students, some was given to helpers or other

students. This year, the goal is to produce and bottle 50 gallons right in the school sugaring house. Some will be given in bulk to the high school's culinary program for special breakfasts and recipes. Students will learn to number, label and grade the syrup following state requirements. The season will culminate in a field trip to a maple producer event where they and other tech centers will enter their product.



By Julia Purdy

Stafford Tech Center forestry students prepare maple trees for sugaring.



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Rutland CO-OP

The Rutland Area Food Co-op is a community-owned grocery and wellness market situated in downtown Rutland. As a food cooperative, we are owned by a membership base of around 2,000 members. We aim to provide affordable access to high-quality, local, organic and sustainable foods and goods. At the same time, as a mission-driven, community-oriented business, we proudly strengthen our region by carrying products of more than 180 local businesses. 77 Wale St. Rutland. rutlandcoop.com 802-773-0737



Liquid Art

Relax in the warm atmosphere at Liquid Art. Look for artfully served lattes from their La Marzocco espresso machine, or if you want something stronger, try their signature cocktails. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, they focus on healthy fare and provide you with a delicious meal different than anything else on the mountain. liquidartvt.com, (802) 422-2787.



Sugar and Spice

Stop on by to Sugar and Spice for a home style breakfast or lunch served up right. Try six different kinds of pancakes and/or waffles or order up some eggs and home fries. For lunch they offer a Filmore salad, grilled roast beef, burgers and sandwiches. Take away available. www.vtsugarandspice.com 802-773-7832.



Back Country Café

The Back Country Café is a hot spot for delicious breakfast foods. Choose from farm fresh eggs, multiple kinds of pancakes and waffles, omelets or daily specials to make your breakfast one of a kind. Just the right heat Bloody Marys, Mimosas, Bellini, VT Craft Brews, Coffee and hot chocolate drinks. Maple Syrup and VT products for sale. Check Facebook for daily specials. 802-422-4411.



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killington market

Killington Market

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The Toasted Pecan restaurant, serving dinner Wednesday through Saturday, 4pm. Southern inspired cuisine, featuring local Vermont produce, meats, cheese and products. Chef owned and operated. Located in Pittsfield, a short drive from Killington on Route 100. toastedpecanvt.com. 802-746-8999.

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Voted the best ribs and burger in Killington, Moguls is a great place for the whole family. Soups, onion rings, mozzarella sticks, chicken fingers, buckets of chicken wings, salads, subs and pasta are just some of the food that's on the menu.

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maryloukillington.com



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Soup Dog

With a focus on soups and hotdogs, this restaurant offers a delicious and comforting menu for visitors and locals alike. Opening in the winter of 2023, Soup Dog invites guests to stop by and enjoy their tasty offerings.

The menu features a wide variety of soups, paired with delicious bread, as well as specialty hotdog toppings. Guests also have the option to create their own hotdog combinations. (802) 353-9277. Visit us on Facebook.

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← **Spring at the Beast**
 from page 1

Our diligent mountain ops team continues to build a base, enabling us to keep legendary trails such as the Woodward Peace Park and Superstar rolling as long as Mother Nature allows.”

The 2024 Spring Pass is available starting Thursday, Feb. 22 for \$359, providing skiers and snowboarders of all ages with unlimited spring skiing and riding from March 15 through the end of season, which goes as long as conditions allow.

March kicks off the spring event lineup with the 10th annual Slash & Berm Banked Slalom on March 1-3 and stretches into May with Vermont Green Up Day. This season also will introduce two female-centric events, Get the Girls Out! with SheJumps and Love Your Peaks from Boarding for Breast Cancer (B4BC).

Also new this year, the Pond Skim and Easter Sunrise Service will offer pre-registration to prevent having to turn guests away at the door. A nominal fee (\$10) for the Easter service will benefit B4BC. Tickets for both events, as well as for the annual Bear Mountain Mogul Challenge, will go on sale Thursday, Feb. 22 at 10 a.m.

In addition to headline events, the resort also plans to host several casually energetic happenings at the new K-1 Lodge and Roaring Brook Umbrella Bar throughout the spring. If conditions allow, The Beast will host a multi-sport weekend featuring skiing and riding, golf, and mountain biking over Memorial Day and offer skiing and riding into June.



Courtesy Killington Resort

Cheers to spring skiing! Girls toast to unforgettable moments at Killington, with the iconic Superstar ski trail in the background, adorned with bumped-up moguls.

2024 spring event lineup

- Friday, March 1- Saturday, March 2 Slash & Berm Banked Slalom
- Sunday, March 3 Slash & Berm Grom Slalom
- Friday, March 8 Ski VT Specialty Food Day at Killington
- Saturday, March 9 Ski VT Specialty Food Day at Pico
- Friday, March 8 Get the Girls Out!
- Sunday, March 10 Red Bull Slide-in Tour
- Saturday, March 16 Vertical Challenge at Pico Mountain
- Saturday, March 30 Love Your Peaks
- Sunday, March 31 Easter Sunrise Service & Egg Hunt
- Saturday, April 6 Bear Mountain Mogul Challenge
- Saturday, April 13 Pond Skim
- Saturday, April 13 Woodward Wind Down
- Saturday, April 20 Season Pass Holder Appreciation Day & Dazed and Defrosted
- Saturday, May 4 VT Green Up Day
- For more information, visit: killington.com.



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Solutions

From page 23

Crossword

P	A	R	S		E	C	T		B	A	T				
S	L	A	K	E		A	L	A		E	A	C	H		
T	A	J	I	K		R	E	C		B	L	E	U		
	E	A	M	E	S		N	A	T		L	A	D	S	
					A	M	E	R	I	C	A	S			
P	R	E	M	A	T	U	R	E	L	Y					
E	N	E	M	I	E	S		R	E	M					
T	A	L	E	R						B	E	R	M	E	
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					U	N	A	V	A	I	L	A	B	L	E
			R	E	S	O	N	A	T	E					
M	O	A	B		D	K	M		S	A	B	E	R		
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N	E	B	N		N	E	E			R	A	B	I	A	
D	A	I			E	N	D			S	E	N	D		

Sudoku

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



Courtesy The Carving Studio & Sculpture Center

Submitted

The Carving Studio & Sculpture Center is hosting a workshop on carving alabaster from February 24-25, led by sculptor Nora Valdez, aimed at beginners and experienced sculptors, with fees of \$195 for one day and \$350 for both days.

Discover the Art of Carving Alabaster at the Carving Studio & Sculpture Center Workshop

Saturday, Feb. 24 – Sunday, Feb. 25 at 9 a.m.—WEST RUTLAND—The Carving Studio & Sculpture Center (CSSC), 636 Marble Street, West Rutland is holding an upcoming workshop on carving alabaster. Led by sculptor Nora Valdez, this workshop offers participants an opportunity to explore the ancient art of stone.

Alabaster, known for its ease of carving and beauty, will be the focus of the workshop. Participants will learn the art of direct carving and three-dimensional thinking, discovering how to bring their imagined shapes to life through the tactile process of carving. Whether beginners or experienced sculptors, attendees will be guided

through the process of planning, shaping, and refining their creations using traditional hand-carving techniques and safety practices.

Participants can choose to attend one or both days of the workshop, with fees set at \$195 for one day and \$350 for both days.

For over 35 years, the Carving Studio & Sculpture Center (CSSC) has been a leading institution in sculptural education, offering workshops, residencies, and exhibitions in a wide range of media.

For registration and more information, visit: www.carvingstudio.org or contact the Carving Studio & Sculpture Center at info@carvingstudio.org or 802-438-2097.

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Unleash the groms!

Mini Shred Madness Hits Killington Park

Saturday, Feb. 24 at 9 a.m.—KILLINGTON—Killington is hosting a park competition for the young groms. Compete for prizes and share in the fun with other skiers and riders in a friendly and fun environment. Grom skiers and riders (13 years & under) are invited to get a feel for park riding and experience the rules and navigation of the park. Mini Shred Madness is all about having fun in a competition setting. Free giveaways will be handed out at the event to competitors.

Divisions:

- Super Grom - Ages 9 & under (first-time park riders): boys & girls combined
- Grom - Ages 10 - 13 (have park-riding experience): boys & girls

Registration :

Registration will take place from 9-10 a.m. on the 2nd floor of the Pico Base Lodge.

Entry fee is \$20 for all divisions.

No registration will be taken after 10 a.m. on event day.

All participants of Mini Shred Madness must have a parent/guardian fill out an Express Assumption of Risk form for them.

If spots are still available, day-of registration will take place 9-10 a.m. Participants may pay only via credit/debit card.

Rules:

Each participant must wear a properly fastened snow sports helmet during all event practice/inspection and competition.

Scope it out. Make a habit of course/venue inspection before every event.

Know your limits (skill and ability levels) and stay within them. This isn't the time to try something you've never done before.



Courtesy Killington Resort

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Courtesy Killington Resort

Enter the zone: Red's Backyard hikeable jib park

Sunday, Feb. 25, at 1 p.m.—KILLINGTON— Killington Resort welcomes back Olympic gold medalist Red Gerard on Sunday. Join Red for an afternoon hike session in his very own Red's Backyard at Ramshead featuring some sweet giveaways.

From 1-3 p.m., don't miss the chance to ride alongside Red, enjoy some complimentary s'mores, and win some prizes. A standout rider will even go home with a Burton snowboard signed by Red himself.

Freestyle skiing/snowboarding has long embraced the concept of bringing freestyle terrain to life with what is lying around in the yard at home. It's that first snow of the season stoke—before the resorts open and lifts turn. It has a history of generating a level of creativity and determined motivation to get out on the

snow by any means necessary.

The inspiration for Red's Backyard zone came from Olympic gold medalist Red Gerard's own backyard rail garden just steps from his parents' back door. Killington is taking a few tips from Red and bringing this hike-style zone to the Woodward Mountain Park for all to enjoy. Complete with rails of varying difficulty, Red's Backyard is his go-to place for dialing in his most technical rail tricks, or late-night park sessions with his buddies.

Located at the base of Ramshead, Red's Backyard allows athletes to practice and progress on their own terms. There is a range of jib features from small to large. It's a hike park, too, so you can access it even if you don't have a regular lift ticket—just head to the ticket window and complete a risk waiver for a hike-only ticket.

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SUMMER CAMP



The profound impact of summer camps on young minds

As the summer sun stretches its golden rays across the sky, children eagerly pack their bags, brimming with excitement and anticipation.

For many young adventurers, summer camp is not merely a seasonal getaway but a transformative journey filled with boundless exploration, growth, and cherished memories.

Summer camps serve as vibrant hubs of learning and discovery, offering a rich tapestry of experiences that extend far beyond the classroom walls. From traditional overnight camps nestled in the wilderness to specialized day camps focused on a particular interest or skill, these immersive environments provide a nurturing space for children to flourish.

One of the most profound impacts of summer camps is the sense of independence they instill in young campers. Away from the familiar comforts of home, children learn to navigate new environments, make decisions, and forge meaningful connections. Whether conquering a challenging hike, collaborating on a team-building exercise, or mastering a new craft, campers emerge

Whether conquering a challenging hike, collaborating on a team-building exercise, or mastering a new craft, campers emerge with a heightened sense of self-confidence and resilience.

with a heightened sense of self-confidence and resilience.

Summer camps offer a sanctuary for creativity to thrive. Freed from the constraints of standardized curricula, children are encouraged to unleash their imagination through a myriad of activities spanning arts and crafts, music, theater, sports, and outdoor adventures. Whether painting a masterpiece, composing a song, or building a fort in the woods, campers discover the joy of self-expression and the limitless possibilities of their imagination.

Beyond individual growth, summer camps foster a profound sense of community and belonging. Campers from diverse backgrounds come together to form bonds that transcend cultural barriers and unite them in shared experiences. Through cooperative games, group challenges, and communal meals around the campfire, children

learn the value of teamwork, empathy, and respect for others—a lesson that extends far beyond the campgrounds.

In addition to personal development, summer camps provide invaluable opportunities for outdoor exploration and environmental stewardship. Immersed in the natural world, campers develop a deep appreciation for the environment and learn the importance of conservation and sustainability. Whether embarking on nature hikes, studying local flora and fauna, or participating in eco-friendly initiatives, children forge a lifelong connection with the planet and a commitment to preserving its beauty for future generations.

As the summer days unfold in a symphony of laughter, learning, and adventure, the true meaning of summer camp becomes clear: it is a transformative journey that shapes the hearts and minds of young adventurers, equipping them with the skills, memories, and friendships to last a lifetime. Let the summer beckon you!



Courtesy of Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures

Campers and counselor enjoy the view from the top of Buttermilk Falls, Ludlow, Vermont.



Courtesy of Camp Betsy Cox

Campers at Camp Betsy Cox strike a pose inside the cozy lodge, brimming with camaraderie and memories that will last a lifetime.



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PITTSFORD—As the summer season approaches, families seeking a distinctive summer camp experience for their daughters are invited to discover Camp Betsey Cox. Founded in 1953 by Jean Smith Davies and her husband Charles Davies, Camp Betsey Cox, located on 140 Betsey Cox Lane, Pittsford, is a camp for girls, young women and gender non-binary campers that offers a one-of-a-kind environment where girls can explore, learn, and grow in a supportive community.

Rustic Living and Natural Beauty

Camp Betsey Cox provides girls with the opportunity to experience rustic living surrounded by nature. Situated amidst forests, meadows, and a small lake, the camp offers easy access to reservoirs of the Green Mountains. Located near the city of Rutland, the camp provides a perfect balance of tranquility and accessibility.

Structured Activities and Empowerment

At Camp Betsey Cox, girls can choose from sixteen activities structured around skill achievements, allowing them to pursue their interests and develop new talents. The camp empowers girls to design their own daily programs, fostering responsibility, decision-making skills, and independence. Trained staff members support campers as they set goals, overcome challenges, and explore new activities.

Simpler Lifestyle and Personal Growth

Life in a rustic cabin encourages a simpler lifestyle, free from the distractions of technology. Campers forge deep connections and friendships through face-to-face interactions, learning the value of teamwork and communication. In the cabin and with their peers, girls establish

their own rules for successful group living, becoming problem solvers and diplomats in the process.

Diverse Community and Service Learning

Camp Betsey Cox celebrates diversity and inclusivity, welcoming campers and staff from various national and international backgrounds. Each member of the camp community contributes to its success through shared responsibilities and service learning opportunities. The camp schedule includes ample free time for campers to explore their creativity and pursue their interests.

Leadership Opportunities and Fun-filled Summers

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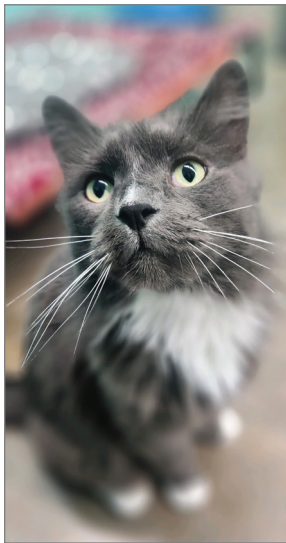
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Johnny Cash—2-year-old.
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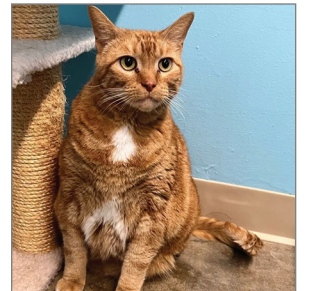
Maddy-Jack—2-year-old.
 Spayed female. Beagle mix.



Leland—3-year-old.
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Odin—2-3-year-old.
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King—10-year-old.
 Neutered male. Domestic shorthair.



Mittens—12-year-old.
 Spayed female. Domestic shorthair.



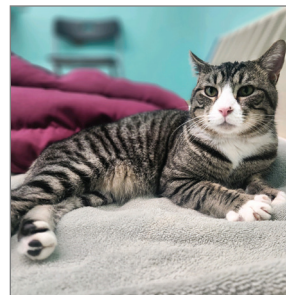
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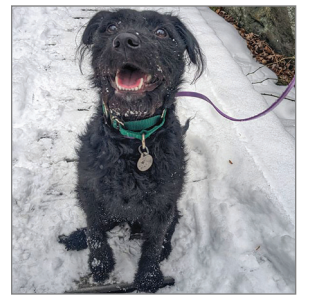
Pop Tart—6-year-old.
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Cosmic Catalogue



Aries
March 21 - April 20



The more time out you can take for yourself this week, the better. If you're doing all the right things in terms of diet and exercise, then maybe it's your soul that is tired. Rest, relaxation and even a bit of meditation will do you the world of good. Also, you may have to address a lingering issue with a friend, group or a community that you're involved with. The chance to start over is possible.

Leo
July 21 - August 20



Your relationships may take on a new flavor this week as Venus and Mars join forces. Tension between you may reach a tipping point which could cause some conflict, both of the sweet and spicy variety. While at the same time, the chance to kiss and make up will feel even sweeter. Regardless of what happens, pay attention the fact that these issues are coming up for you to heal, not to make your life feel harder.

Sagittarius
November 21 - December 20



If you're feeling restless or uncertain when it comes to your living and family situation, the Sun will shine some light on it this week and for the next month. You may be longing to put down roots somewhere or with someone. If that's the case, you do need not to be in denial about things or imagine a future that you're not communicating. The chance to reveal what's on your mind arrives this week.

Taurus
April 21 - May 20



New agreements can be made this week within your professional sphere. You may receive support from an unlikely source or join forces with someone you didn't think you would. A new alliance may arrive that helps steer your life direction if it isn't about your work. Friendships are highlighted too and it may be time for you to make room for those you'd like to remain in your life. Those you don't, then choices are required.

Virgo
August 21 - September 20



You can bury your head in the sand when it comes to certain relationship issues or you can deal with them head on. As the Sun moves into your relationship zone this week, you won't be able to bury your head in the sand or pretend that things are something that they clearly aren't. The chance to gain clarity isn't always easy, but you're better off for having light than being in the dark.

Capricorn
December 21 - January 20



If you're in the position to change your income, secure a new client or make a sale or purchase, as sweet deal might arrive this week. A new beginning and new relationships are likely that will change your financial future, you may have to start dreaming a little bigger than you have been. A Full Moon will light up your travel and adventure zone. Where would you like to go? Your dream may be closer within reach than you think.

Gemini
May 21 - June 20



You've been filled with desire for things you've not wanted for some time. Travel, adventure and spiritual paths may all be piquing your curiosity again. While having things to look forward to and to give life a sense of meaning, it's also important to not lose sight of some practical issues too. If you want the best things out of life, you may have to pay your career a little bit of attention. What got you here, won't get you there.

Libra
September 21 - October 20



Whatever your current status is in the romance department at the moment, things could take a turn this week. A turn for the best or a turn for the worst? – it will depend. One way or another though, you'll get the opportunity to discover more about love and therefore, more about yourself and what you really want. If what you're currently doing isn't working, then change your tactics or change your standards.

Aquarius
January 21 - February 20



If you're not liking the way things are going in your life right now, then there isn't much you can do about it. That said, shifting your attitude and outlook can make the world of difference. The silver linings are there for you this week, but it's up to you to seek them out. Also, if you make a promise to yourself this week, then stick to it. Honoring yourself is a big part of success in all areas of life.

Cancer
June 21 - July 20



Your emotions may run high this week in preparation for the upcoming Full Moon that lights up your Mind Zone. While feelings may be ebbing and flowing like the oceanic tide, it will also be important to not lose sight of life's practical details either. The more you can get back to basics with the mundane aspects of your daily routine, the more organized and clear you'll feel. Try not to sweat the small stuff.

Scorpio
October 21 - November 20



Home is where the heart is for you this week. Building a strong foundation with someone you love may also become a priority, or at the least, a talking point. Love, romance and joy are highlighted too. This isn't just about the fun and frivolity of it all either. Instead, start seeing something you take rather lightheartedly a little bit more seriously. Open your heart to new possibilities and see where it may take you.

Pisces
February 21 - March 20



You've had the world seemingly on your shoulders for some time now. Unfortunately, this isn't going to change anytime soon. So the best you can do is get yourself stronger in the process. If you've got a bit sloppy when it comes to the boundaries you know you need to enforce, this week gives you the rare opportunity to restart. It's not too late to start over, stronger and more determined than ever.



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Cassandra has studied astrology for about 20 years. She is an international teacher of astrology who has been published all over the globe.

Not everyone wants what you want them to have

Things start to look a bit different this week. Truths have been revealed and are now exposed to the light. While things are still fractured and in a continuing state of chaos and change, there is an opportunity to see things differently.

As the Sun and Mercury move into imaginative Pisces you might be tempted to see and think about things how you'd imagine them to be. That may seem nice and all, but it would be wise to not lose sight of reality at the same time. Not everyone wants what you want them to have. While hearts may come from



Cosmic Catalogue
By Cassandra Tyndall

the right place, to be in a place of limerence is only going to leave you in a state of fatigue and feeling disillusioned. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for someone else, and for yourself, is to say "No."

The weekend will illuminate the night sky with the Cosmos' silver circle. The Full Moon in Virgo is a reminder to not lose your head, nor your heart. Whatever issue you may feel torn about, before you're tempted to become a savior, consider where responsibility has been lacking. It won't be much longer before the bill comes due.

Horses, a haiku

Beautiful horses,
They are very powerful,
Majestic creatures.



Poetry Is Power
By Bree Sarandrea



Submitted

The big move from tent to basement

Part 3 of a series on building our Killington dream lodge

Every weekend and during vacations we fled to Vermont for more adventures while building the ski lodge Dad dreamed of. While residing in our tent in the woods, we cleared the land and leveled the ground, no small achievement in a state made of rock. The next step on Dad's list was to build a basement with cement block walls. Dad hired a mason (we thought) to start it, but when we returned the following weekend, the wall he'd begun was too far off kilter. He must have been tipsy when he built it so it had to be torn down and redone. Once corrected by someone



Mountain Meditation
By Marguerite Jill Dye

else, the other walls followed — all checked with Dad's level. Fortunately, they were as straight as an arrow.

Dad did all the work he could but needed help with some of the big jobs and those that required too many weekends. Most of the workers Dad hired to help him were diligent, experienced and became our friends. Some of the others just didn't show up.

Dad always knew what the next step was. He was a mechanical engineer but not an expert in construction. So, each week in preparation, Dad studied, Meditation → 49

How ebbing snow cover effects plants and animals

When it comes to winter in the North Country, brown is not beautiful. Climate change has brought sudden and extreme fluctuations in weather along with a dramatic decline in the amount of snowfall that blankets the ground. This is especially marked in the Northeast, where winter is warming faster than the national average. Our weather whipsaws from midwinter-like conditions to unseasonably mild temperatures and back again, often within hours. Storms that begin with the promise of snow frequently end in rain or freezing rain.

This unpredictable, declining snow regime is more than just inconvenient. From recreational activities such as snowmobiling and skiing (which contributes \$4.6 billion to the economy in the Northeast), to challenges in logging operations when the ground is frozen for significantly less time, to overwintering plants and animals — our region is riding a meteorological roller-coaster. Overall, winters are shorter, temperatures warmer, there is less snow cover, and we are experiencing more wet-snow and rain events.

Research conducted by Dartmouth College's Department of Geography predicts that by 2050 snowfall in the Northeast could drop to half of today's levels. The Appalachian Mountain Club reports that in the past century snowpack depth has declined, and the number of winter days with snow cover has fallen by three weeks. Some 95% of the midwinter snowpack in northeastern forests could disappear by 2100.

The number of days with snow cover each year has been declining for decades. A study at Salem State University in Massachusetts found that from 2000 to 2022, North America's annual snow coverage decreased by an area nearly the size of Texas. New England and New York saw

some of the most marked annual declines. And because snow's white surface reflects sunlight and helps to mitigate climate change, the decline in snow cover is accelerating the rising temperatures.

According to a Dartmouth College study published in the journal Nature in January 2024, during the past 40 years the seasonal snowpack has decreased by 10% to 20% per decade in the northeastern and southwestern U.S. and in other regions worldwide. The authors of the study predict that by the end of the 21st Century, the Northeast could often be nearly snow-free by the end of March. Another study revealed that the proportion of snow that makes up the total volume of annual precipitation in northern New England fell from 30% in 1949 to 23% in 2000 and has continued to drop.

These changes have critical implications for plants and wildlife. Snow provides cover and insulation for animals, and it protects tree and plant roots. Research from the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in New Hampshire found that sugar maples whose roots were exposed to extreme cold when no snowpack was present experienced increased damage and die-off, resulting in a 40% to 55% reduction in growth that lingered for three years.

A depth of 20 inches of snow is required, on average, to insulate and protect plants and animals from harsh weather. Even in extreme cold, the subnivean (under the snow) temperature remains steady at about 32 F. Mice, voles, and other small mammals create travel tunnels and living quarters in this insulated subnivean zone. Less snow cover means less insulation, which requires animals to consume more food in order to maintain their body temperature. Animals that rely on these small mammals as prey — including foxes and

TOS → 54



The Outside Story
By Michael J. Caduto



Be careful what you wish for

There are several families who live in my neighborhood. Most are either retirees or younger couples with adolescent children. I know all of them somewhat but none of them deeply, meaning, I've had wonderful conversations and interactions with many of them over the years, but very few are coming over for drinks.

One neighbor who lives down the street has two teenage daughters. I've seen the girls out and about over the years, usually playing soccer or gymnastics in their front yard. They seem like bright, well-adjusted kids.

I don't know these girls or their parents other than to say hi when I happen to run by their house, or they happen to be walking their dog past mine. However, I am observant, and because of this, I've noticed things now and again.

For instance, during the last school year, this family suddenly had another child in their home, a young man who appeared to be around 16 years old. I'd see this new face in the mornings as I left for work or on the weekends when the family was gathered in the driveway.

I contemplated what might lead to a new family member, but never understood the whole story until one afternoon when one of the daughters and this young man walked by my house. I happened to be heading out to get the mail as they passed by and when I overheard their conversation, I picked up on a distinct foreign accent coming from the boy.

I then landed on the assumption that he was a foreign exchange student spending the school year with a host family. And while I never got confirmation for my theory, I did notice that the young man vanished soon after the school year ended.

Over that school year, I would occasionally see the father of this family outside attending to his yard maintenance or washing his car. I noticed that he never looked happy. He had a sullen appearance most days and seemed to carry himself with an air of dejection.

And then miraculously, when summer arrived, I noticed that he started walking the neighborhood several times a week. He'd stroll past my house talking on his cell phone, usually laughing with a big smile on his face, looking like he didn't have a care in the world.

I have no business making broad assumptions about other people's lives, but if I were a betting man, I would wager

that this dad spent the entire school year living in a state of heightened anxiety given that a good looking teenage boy from Europe was living under the same roof with his impressionable daughters.

When I was in high school, my parents agreed to host a foreign exchange student through a local church program. I was 15 or 16 at the time and the young woman who was matched with us was 17. She was also from Sweden... and blond.

I won't mince words here, but I was the toast of my entire friend group in the lead-up to her arrival.

Petra arrived at the beginning of the school year. My mother prepared a special bedroom for her with all the prerequisite items that any young woman would find endearing. (As excited as I was about having a teenage girl sleeping in the room next to me, my mother was more excited to think she could dote on a girl, having raised three boys.)

Unfortunately, the dream scenario turned into a nightmare rather quickly. Petra rarely left her room, and on the occasions that she did, she was miserable. No matter what we did, it was wrong. After several weeks of her intense unhappiness, my parents contacted the agency that placed her, and had her moved to another family.

We found out later that Petra went through that family and another one before being shipped back to Sweden. She caused so much chaos during her stay in the U.S. that the church had to reevaluate its exchange program.

Chaos is also the main component of this week's feature, "Lover, Stalker, Killer," an intense documentary that examines a failed relationship and a missing woman. And while that may not sound intriguing initially, I promise you that this unique string of events will have you aghast.

Like any good documentary, "Lover, Stalker, Killer" creates more questions than answers as the story unfolds. But when the resolution hits, you will be praising God that it wasn't you.

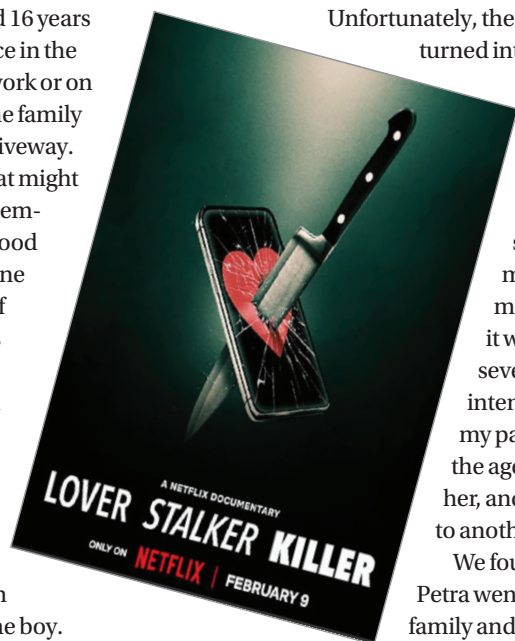
Check this one out if you love documentaries based on true crime. Just be prepared to rethink dating if you happen to be single.

An implausible "B" for "Lover, Stalker, Killer," now available to stream on Netflix.

Got a question or comment for Dom? You can email him at moviediary@att.net.



The Movie Diary
By Dom Cioffi



Fresh tracks, the joy of a surprise powder day!

It wasn't supposed to snow. Like there wasn't an inkling that there would be anything coming out of the sky at all. It was predicted to be a normal grey Vermont day, nothing special scheduled at all except for the KMS Future Stars race.

But Vermont weather is never what you expect it to be. Waking up, I could feel the silence outside. That *shin-shin*, the crystalline silent that only comes from the absence of sound. That silence as fresh snow absorbs all the sound around it.

And so, of course, I jumped out of bed as quickly as possible (which is, obviously, not as quickly as I use to do) and headed for the nearest window. It was dumping outside. And it's the Saturday of President's Week. Oh crap.

I threw everything in my boot bag and got dressed as quickly as possible. There was no way I was getting stuck in the powder-hungry traffic on my way to work at the mountain so I needed to move fast and get on the road before everyone else realized it was snowing.

Our big race was postponed a few hours

so the techs could figure out setting up the course in the snow. I was not disappointed with this at all. Instead of spending the morning side slipping Highline, we took the kids right into the powder.

As much powder as we could, anywhere we could get to. We were like hungry Powder Monsters, making fresh tracks all over the place. For some reason, lots of regulars had decided that Killington on a Saturday would not be a good idea, so it felt like we had the secret pow stashes to ourselves.

And so we learned to farm. You know, where you lay tracks down one next to the other, nice and tight, so no one has to ski over anyone else's tracks and everyone gets fresh? More of a West Coast concept with all their open spaces, but with the limited amount of people out on Saturday morning, we were able to farm and come back the next run and finish tracking out the trail!

We dropped into woods that we really shouldn't have been in because Team Pom-Pom is made up of 5- and 6-year-olds, but

Living the Dream → 53



Living the Dream
By Merisa Sherman

Flower and veggie seeds

If you are a gardener you are probably ready to put the snowy days behind you and spend some time "playing in the dirt."

I have already purchased my veggie and flower seeds and just looking at the pictures on the packets puts me in a happy place!

Winter is an ideal time to purchase seeds. The earlier you shop the better your chances of getting what you want. Local garden centers have a nice selection of all the popular choices.

But it's always fun to try growing one or two items that are not among your usual selections. Browsing through catalogs or searching the various internet websites is a great way to pass a winter day. Just seeing all the bright colored flowers will make your day brighter.

If you sow annual flower seeds directly into your garden it will take a couple of months for them to mature. That time frame works well because they can fill in the empty spaces where bulb flowers and early perennials have died off.

I have a few favorite seeds that I sow around Memorial Day. One is the Cut and Come Again Zinnia. It does just what its name implies! A new flower will grow at the point where you made a cut. Zinnias come in many colors and will enhance the color palette of your garden.

Nasturtiums are another great option. There are several color choices for this flower and the petals can be used in salads if the seeds haven't been treated in any way. My other favorites are strawflowers and statice, both of which can both be dried and enjoyed inside all winter.

Growing flowers from seed allows you to keep your garden full while only spending a minimal amount of money.

When buying veggie seeds check the "days until harvest" and in some cases you can extend your enjoyment of them for an additional 3-4 weeks. Carrots and cucumbers are two examples where different varieties lengthen the harvest time.

If you start your seeds inside you can expedite the bloom time. You can grow them in something as simple as a yogurt cup filled with seed starting mix placed on a window sill. Or you can get more elaborate and use a heated germination mat and a grow light. The latter option will give you a more hardy plant that isn't "leggy." But I place small pots on shelves in

Looking Forward → 49



Looking Forward
By Mary Ellen Shaw

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← **Looking Forward:**
from page 47

front of a window and re-pot the plants into larger pots before they can get leggy. That works for me. Once the plants are “hardened off” outside and placed in the garden they will soon catch up in size to those that were grown more elaborately.

Winter is also a good time to think about what didn’t work for you last year and how to solve that problem. Having your crops eaten by deer, rabbits or groundhogs is something most of us face. Fencing in your garden area doesn’t mean that a critter won’t dig under the fence and make short work of your veggies. One solution to that problem is to lay 2-foot-wide chicken wire along the perimeter of your garden fence. Use garden staples to hold

the wire in place. You can cover the chicken wire with dirt or mulch if you don’t want it visible.

We have rabbits in our yard and they think that lettuce grown in the ground is a salad bar for them! I now grow lettuce in raised boxes that are about 3 feet high. It makes picking the lettuce easy and chicken wire laid over the top of the boxes prevents squirrels from burying their “treasures” inside and disturbing the contents.

Have fun seed shopping and think spring... unless you are a skier. If you are, I know that you don’t want to see the snow disappear.

Maybe it can remain up on the mountain and then both you and I will be happy!

← **Meditation:**
from page 46

researched and interviewed experts at New Jersey and New York building sites. He budgeted and bought building materials that were on sale or repurposed. We hauled them north in or on top of our 1956 blue Country Squire station wagon. Her name was Blue Bell. She was nearly

the cement mixer, then measured and added cement mix and water into the loud rotating monster. It was like making a giant cake except we didn’t need an oven. We pivoted the mixer downwards to pour our thick liquid batter into Dad’s wheelbarrow. He rolled it along the open floor frame where he’d laid pipes, pebbles, and metal wires. Then he dumped and evenly spread the cement, just like icing a cake. The floor was so large, 30 feet by 60 feet, it took many batches and was divided in sections.

To have a roof over our heads as well as a floor were humongous accomplishments. As soon as the floor was dry enough, we carried up furniture on top of the car. Mom had been shopping in New Jersey thrift stores to her heart’s content for the past year for used furniture and other stuff to supply our to-be Vermont ski lodge. The basics were for the basement including beds, tables, chairs, and miscellaneous. Her shopping continued to fill our attic, then our downstairs from stairs to door with nicer things for the future when we had an upstairs to put them in. Tunneling through it was quite a challenge, but Star didn’t mind a bit since the obstacle course became a game for our flexible sweet Labrador.

As we arrived with the furniture, we began breaking up our outdoor campsite

and gradually moved into our brand new basement with a floor and a roof overhead. I loved helping to set it up. Mom’s inner interior decorator came out in a flourish with the furniture layout and her many creative touches. The natural *feng shui* she felt made sense for our needs which were quite utilitarian. But Mom had a need for aesthetics so our kitchen was at the end by the windows with a view. We could prepare food and wash dishes looking out to see what our men folk were up to. Her pioneer spirit was at its height.

A round oak table with old Mission style chairs created a warm family dining environment (although the room remained quite cold). The wall was lined with wooden storage boxes we’d used outside with locks and keys that held tools, sleeping bags, pillows, blankets and whatever else might be needed. Between the crates and back wall was a row of seven beds, six twins and a bunk. Mom chose the bottom bunk (to protect her from whatever fell from above).

Mom added splashes of color where she could with the bedding (over drab sleeping bags), a cheerful tablecloth, colorful mismatched dishes, and myriad other touches. Our Vermont basement became our second home for much longer than we ever expected.

Marguerite Jill Dye is an artist and writer from Killington and Florida.

The beams were so heavy they caved in the roof, but Dad found a solution. .. he laid down in the middle seat and pushed the roof back up with his legs in true Vermont jackleg style.

12 feet long but not long enough for two of the 16-foot beams or multiple joists we carried on top every week for a year.

Those beams Dad reclaimed from a New York City demolition stuck out on both ends where we tied red flags and white rags as warnings to other drivers. Whenever we stopped, we carefully checked and retied ropes and flags in place. The beams were so heavy they caved in the roof, but Dad found a solution. Star and I got out of the car so Dad could lay down in the middle seat. He pushed the roof back up with his legs in true Vermont jackleg style. (Dad had broken the strength machine when he played football at Annapolis!)

We hauled a beam and/or joist each week. Dad used leverage, pulleys, and sheer strength to lift up and put them in place. He drilled and attached heavy steel bolts and brackets that will hold them together forever. Vermonters far and wide who heard tell of our house looked up the hill, scratched their heads and asked, “What’s it gonna be?” Once they saw our house right up close, they added, “I know where I’m going when there’s a bomb scare!”

When all the beams and joists were in place, we nailed down plywood and rolled out tar paper. We sealed the seams with sticky black tar, also from Rutland’s Mintzer Brothers.

Mom and I mixed the cement for the floor. We learned how to operate



Submitted
Concrete was mixed and carried in a wheelbarrow to build the lodge foundation.



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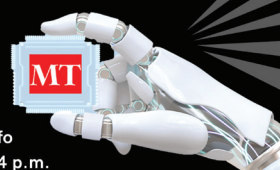


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THE MOUNTAIN TIMES

Finding Kolsch, EDM in the Tulum jungle

A bucket list victory

Editor's note: Bruce Bouchard, former executive director of The Paramount Theatre, and his partner Maureen McKenna Padula have traveled from Rutland to the Riviera Maya for the past three years. This series covers adventures, food, and testimonials from Vermont to the tropics.

One month before I met Maureen McKenna Padula, the miracle woman with whom I spend my life, I was driving to work... and this electronic music popped onto my car radio. I pulled over to the side of the road to listen.

"What the hell is this mesmerizing music?" I asked myself.

It was Kolsch, a Belgian EDM deejay.

Later that day after work, I put a large swath of Kolsch on the JDL, danced away in my apartment and arrived at two conclusions: I will fall in love to this music and it'll be in this Pittsford Vermont Carriage House. The rest is history.

Maureen and I fell in love in early 2019 and we have listened to hundreds of hours of the Kolsch body of work (check out Kolsch on You Tube "Tomorrowland, 2023" from Belgium and the subsequent concert for reference). He has become our muse, our touchstone. We often wondered where we could see him live: Amsterdam? The Top of the Eiffel Tower? Rio de Janeiro? Belgium? We were committed to pursuing this dream.

Two nights before our annual departure to our haven in Playa Del Carmen, Mexico, Maureen randomly googled the Kolsch itinerary... She slowly turned her screen to me with wide eyes and a smile: "He will be performing in Tulum when we are in Mexico, 65 miles away!!"

There were two options, the annual Tulum Rave — called ZAMNA (20,000-30,000 crazed young people expected to be in attendance) featuring Kolsch on Jan. 20 or to see him deejay at a club called Bonbonnaire, in the Hotel Zone of Tulum, two nights earlier.

After expert advice from Maureen's Millennial son

(steeped in Rave and festival experience) we quickly chose the more sane club option (three weeks hence) and acquired tickets to the venue (other Bonbonnaire locations are Majorca, London and The Philippines), tucked back into the jungle off the Hotel Zone road.

If price was any indication; table service was listed at \$500 U.S., cocktails hovering at \$20, we took general admission at \$50 each. It was a good bet that they knew what they were doing.

We had some concerns and reservations about Tulum. We had read considerable negative press and reviews to the tune of: Billionaires and children of billionaires ("influencers") proliferate, and their demands and grievances, show up all over the place. Additionally, the weird disparity between the sad, worn town

called Tulum and its wealthy "second city" — the Hotel Zona (7 kilometers from the "town") — seemed something of a turnoff and we had simply decided not to explore... until the Kolsch.

After an expensive cab ride from the town to the Hotel Zone, it took a bit of hunt-and-peck to find the place. The hotel zone looked pretty cool, not at all what we imagined (Vegas-y high rises along a beach, similar to Cancun). The Zone road, has kept much of the jungle and the structures seem to grow right up out of the flora and fauna.

Finally we found a tiny red light "sign" announcing Bonbonnaire, illuminated above a nondescript door. After walking down a winding jungle path, we were welcomed by sleek, well-dressed greeters and handsome staff who escorted us into the venue.

I took the opportunity to tell both the key front person at the door and the hosts and hostesses who were to be taking care of us, how very much this evening meant to us, that

To say we were excited to be there was a massive understatement... we were the oldest couple in the audience — by a lot.

we had fallen in love to Kolsch's music and that being here tonight was the culmination of a five-year bucket list priority. They seem a bit shocked by our age... and they went out of their way to tell us that Kolsch would not be on until 1:30 a.m... and would play until after 4 a.m.

To say we were excited to be there was a massive understatement. The older, cute little couple in love were the first through the door. As was proved later, we were the oldest couple in the audience — by a lot.

The venue itself is gorgeous, smaller than we thought (I estimated 250 standing to be its capacity) and beautifully turned out, bathed in deep red, immaculate design features, something of a marriage of Deco and Bauhaus. Additionally, the room was perfectly lit.

We were ushered to a key table and when we informed them that we had not ordered table service (\$500, before drinks) we were told that it was not a problem and we could make ourselves comfortable... they were happy to seat us there as their guests. The hosts, Habib and Gondilla, were interested in our story and wanted to know more — this important detail was to play out later.

The deejay stage was set, the amps were blaring. The exquisite lighting was doing its thing. Accelerants in place and underway, and we were ready to go!!

The opening deejays were terrific, the sound system showing great power. We did some dancing and tightly held one another, eyes locked at the thrill of realizing our dream.

A group of young women took a table to our left, decked out and ready to party. One of them, bejeweled in a form-fitting dress, approached and threw her arms around us and said, "You guys are fantastic! I want to become you. How great that you are here!!"

Kolsch → 53



Tales:
Riviera Maya
By Bruce Bouchard



Submitted
Rune Reilly Kolsch is a Danish electronic dance musician and DJ from Copenhagen.



Submitted
Bruce Bouchard (back center) and Maureen McKenna (front center) partied into the early morning with Kolsch and fans.



Submitted
Maureen McKenna (left), Bruce Bouchard (center) and Rune Reilly Kolsch (right) smile together backstage in Tulum.

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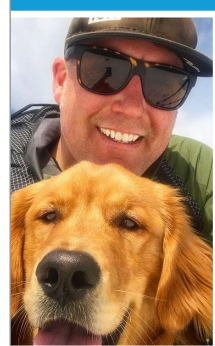
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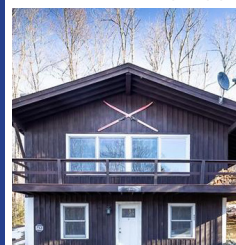
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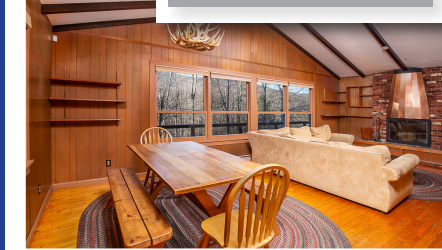
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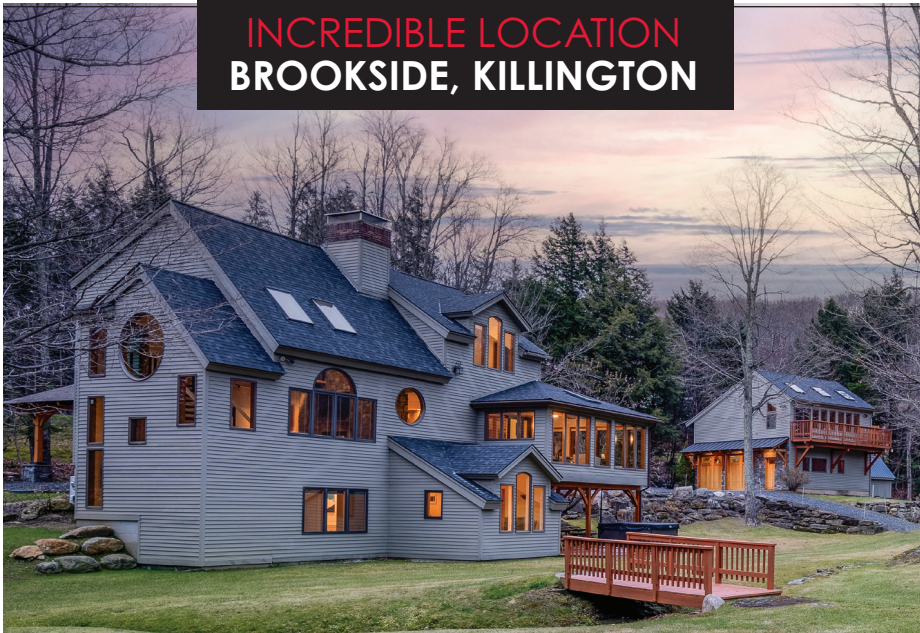
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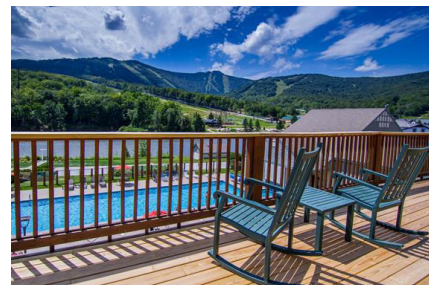


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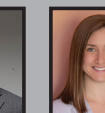
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← **Kolsch:**
from page 50

These acknowledgements continued throughout the night — something akin to the joy of young parents awestruck by very young children delighted at play: “Ah look, they’re so cute!!” Except in reverse. We were delighted and flattered.

1:30 a.m. the Kolsch takes the stage

There he was, Kolsch, silhouetted back behind the controls...his signature black hat framing the man behind the deejay. We were a good distance back on the dance floor, at least 100 feet deep into the room. I was not going to wait this long and want this so much to experience it from the back of the venue. Taking Maureen by hand, we wormed our way to near the front of the stage. We were about 5 feet back. There was an empty couch between the stage and the audience with about 4 feet of space between the front of the couch and the five-foot high stage.

Our initial hostess, Gondolina, swooped in and took the two of us to the front of the couch! We were the only people directly in front of our music shaman!! He was 6 feet away on a 30-degree angle and we began to make regular eye contact! I pumped my fist, showed five fingers and mouthed “five years!!” He beamed right back at us.

More connections

We were in heavy delirium as we danced and danced some more. Later when we turned around to face the crowd, to our shock and amazement, there were about 50 young people focused totally on us, loving us up, fist bumping, taking our hands and dancing with us from the back to the front of the couch. A particular striking young man named Derrick in flat top afro and a distinctive beard kept making contact and shouting love and encouragement. All that energy flowed between us, the rest of the audience, to Kolsch and from Kolsch back to all of us — around again and again!!

To say that all of this was divinely surreal

would severely undercut divine surreality.

Derrick approached us shortly thereafter and asked, “Do you want to go backstage?” “Say what?”

As we made our way back, the hostesses kept coming up and hugging and kissing us, one was in tears. They remembered our story and they were so very kind.

Backstage with Kolsch

We were behind the control panels and after a bit of time, Kolsch let the tech guys run the show for a few moments and made a beeline directly for us! We got a couple of pics, and he was beyond attentive.

“Thank you guys so much for your energy,” he said.

I got to shout my story into his ear.

“ILOVE IT!” he shouted back, grinning from one side of his face to the other.

He played an additional hour from that point and we just sucked up every drop of the experience.

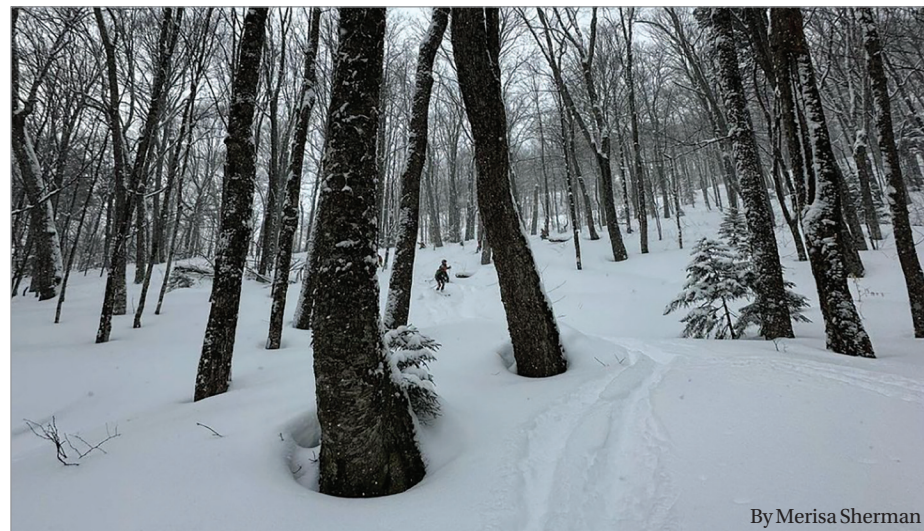
Later, Derrick invited us to a small after-party at his modern home deep in the Tulum jungle. His rooftop was above the trees. A few of the young people who had been dancing at the club showed up: a Spanish entrepreneur named Carlos; Alex, a single Polish mother on a brief respite from Eastern Europe; Micaela, a clothing designer and wannabe deejay (as is Derrick) and an enthusiastic young German who works placing refugees out of Denmark.

The party mellowed down; on his rooftop we were thrilled to see yet another Caribbean sunrise, high above the jungle, clouds flying, color wheel spinning... the sun beginning its ascent.

Later, Derrick arranged a cab to take us to the bus station in Tulum “City” for our ride back to our home to Playa.

Exhaustion, joy, rapture — bucket list one page lighter.

It was one of the all-time most unforgettable nights of our lives!



By Merisa Sherman

← **Livin’ the Dream:**
from page 47

we didn’t have any problems in the thigh deep snow! Well, it was only shin deep for me, but for them, it was probably one of the most amazing powder days they might have on the East Coast. One little girl told me the snow was hitting her in the belly!

Two glorious pre-race runs of top to bottom freshies for our entire group had the kids wearing the biggest smiles ever. We were floating on cloud 9, making really good turns and whooping from our bellies with the pure joy of it all. Maybe I’m spoiling them with all the freshies, but I want the good snow, too! What’s the point of learning every nook and cranny of the mountain if you don’t take advantage of that knowledge when the time comes?

We made it to the top of the course just in time for snack and pre-race inspection. As almost none of us had ever been in gates before, we had to look at them like trees. Which we are obviously extremely familiar with. One young athlete pointed out that it would be easier than trees because it’s only one tree at a time with no other trees to crash into around it.

I wish I had thought about ski racing like that when I was younger. I hated the fear that would envelop me as I stood with my poles over the wand in the start gate. It’s that same rush that grabs you when you’re in the batter’s box. All eyes on you, you only get one chance at success and this is it. You are forced to grab hold of all that fear and push it forward into your skis or your bat or you lose. I would so much rather be tossed about in the trees with the freedom to move about as you will without judgement from anyone but yourself.

We stomped our first ever ski race ever, got our M&M cookies and turned our racing bibs back in. I know the kids were excited about the race, but this coach was excited about the over-the-knee freshies she got on the left side of the course with the parents cheering her on. What a great combination of the best there is about skiing — the community of ski racing combined with the joy of powder skiing. I am so blessed to be able to have such amazing ski buddies every Saturday!! I hope everyone had as much fun in all the powder last weekend as we did!

Merisa Sherman is a long time Killington resident, local Realtor, KMS coach, and member of the Killington development review board. She can be reached at femaleskibum@gmail.com.

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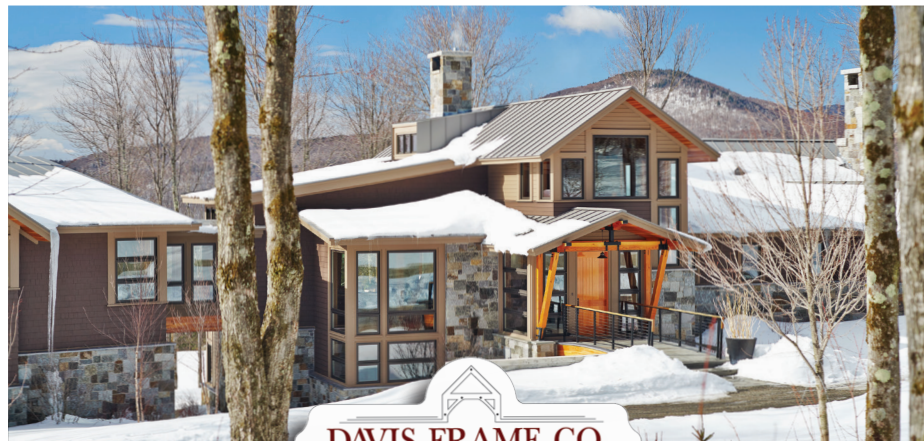
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Act 127:
from page 11

Valley is ranked as having the fifth highest student poverty in the state. There has been a sharp increase in student poverty within Slate Valley over the last six years. Act 127 was designed to help districts like Slate Valley deal with the increased need for services for our disadvantaged students. It aligns with our constitutional commitment to provide a high-quality education to every child in Vermont, regardless of their zip code. Our school districts are facing unprecedented financial challenges this year. But Act 127 was not the genesis of these challenges. Instead, it emerged as a clear response to the urgent need for a more just school funding system—a funding system which, up until then, rewarded wealthier communities with better schools. Addressing the very real and critical budgetary pressures on school districts should not include undoing progress and moving backwards on equity. There are districts that will likely continue to pass their budgets despite large increases in tax rates,

while districts like ours, who were supposed to be advantaged, may end up with less resources than we have this school year; further increasing the inequities in the public education system.

It's imperative to acknowledge that many issues driving up school budgets were at play long before Act 127. Factors such as increasing health insurance expenses, staffing shortages, unfunded legislative mandates, facility maintenance burdens and the complexities of special education funding have continually strained the financial resources of schools.

Act 127 represents a significant step forward in building a fairer and more equitable education system in Vermont. It acknowledges the historical disparities in education funding and seeks to rectify them. We should not move backwards. By keeping our focus on the best interests of our children and families, we can work together to ensure that Act 127 serves as a positive force for change in Vermont's education landscape.

TOS:
from page 46

owls — are unable to break through the hard layer of ice that accumulates on top of the snow during repeated freeze-thaw cycles.

Wood frogs develop a natural antifreeze that enables their tissues to freeze and safely overwinter in the constant environment under snow-covered leaf litter. But vacillating temperatures and snowless conditions can cause a decline in winter survival; frogs that experience multiple freeze-thaw events consume large amounts of energy while transitioning repeatedly into and out of

dormancy.

Prey that develop a white coat for winter camouflage, such as snowshoe hare and weasels, are challenged to hide against a snowless background, which has been shown to decrease survival by up to 7%. In Wisconsin, the snowshoe hare's range has been drifting north with the receding snow by more than 5 miles per decade.

While we humans may not have to worry so immediately about surviving the decline of snow, many of us are wistful for the not-so distant past when fluffy

snow crystals — rather than rain and a heavy, wet "wintery mix" — fell from the cold sky and carpeted the land with a glistening cloak throughout the season.

Michael J. Caduto is a writer, ecologist, and storyteller who lives in Reading, Vermont. He is author of Through a Naturalist's Eyes: Exploring the Nature of New England. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org.

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← **Sorry, Vt:**
from page 11

Facilities were failing and in dire need of repair. After nearly two decades of no funding assistance, estimates for repairs and renovation topped \$6 billion statewide. Schools were also struggling to meet student needs. For years, schools had increasingly become the vehicle by which to provide social services in many of our communities. Schools provided mental health services, pre-K and after-school programs and free meals. These new services, coupled with the daunting task of helping students recover from the global Covid-19 pandemic, increased school budgets statewide.

In 2024 we also had an Agency of Education whose job it was to provide oversight and support for the state's public education system. Unfortunately the governor had failed to appoint anyone to the vacant leadership position for over a year and it suffered from

lack of direction and a lack of resources. In one instance, the agency's failure to follow up on simple paperwork with the US Dept. of Education jeopardized the receipt of over \$100,000 of grant funding.

We also had a state board of education responsible for establishing rules for our education system. Sadly, it was largely beholden to the private schools in Vermont. The board resisted any attempt to make the standards for public and private schools the same. They insisted on maintaining two separate and distinct sets of rules for public and private schools. It was the same tax dollars, but far fewer requirements were attached to those dollars if they flowed to private schools.

In an attempt to improve student equity in the state, the Legislature passed a law in 2022 that included a substantial flaw. This caused the property tax rate to skyrocket statewide. In

an attempt to fix the situation, they quickly passed an update to the law in the 11th hour that had school boards scrambling. The confusion and uncertainty this created was extraor-

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inary. I'd like to tell you how that all ended but we haven't worked through it yet.

Since 1777 we have had a clause in our state constitution referencing the separation of church and state. Often called the compelled support clause, it guarantees: (1) that people are free to practice whatever

religion they choose, free of government intervention and (2) it restricts the flow of taxpayer dollars to support religious institutions. It is, however, hanging on a thread. A Supreme Court

decision in 2023 allowed the flow of taxpayer money to religious schools. While this was the crack in the dam of our compelled support clause, it was the response of state lawmakers and state agencies that broke the levee and let in the floodwaters.

Rather than double down on our public edu-

cation system, we instead attempted to preserve our private school tuitioning program while claiming we were appalled by discrimination. Our Agency of Education told school districts they could no longer withhold funds from religious schools. Our state board of education tacitly approved religious schools that openly discriminated to receive public funds. We were violating our own constitution but nobody cared.

Case in point: in 2024 the Senate considered a bill to move money for afterschool programs out of the Education Fund. Doing so would remove a stricter set of anti-discrimination standards for the use of those dollars. Despite opposition from a vocal group of senators, the body dismissed the concerns and passed the bill. It meant that public taxpayer dollars could easily flow to after school programs that openly discriminated against Vermont's LGBTQ

community.

I'm sorry, Vermont, it didn't need to end up like this. Based on where things were headed in 2024 I can only assume that taxpayer money is flowing to any "education provider" a family desires. I'm guessing accountability is based on economics—the popular schools (the ones with high attendance and are hard to get into) must be the ones that are providing a stellar education. I'm curious if all your students are doing well? I wonder if there's still an Agency of Education, or a state board of education? You probably don't need them now that you've privatized education. Perhaps some kids have been turned away from certain schools because they are "not a good fit." Sadly, gone are the days when that was illegal, but I guess our kids are no longer protected by our constitution.

Neil Odell, Norwich, Dresden school boards



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