

## Vote

### TOWN MEETING DAY IS TUESDAY, MARCH 5

School district budgets, bonds, municipal budgets and various articles all await their fate. Cast your vote, Tuesday!



#### OPINIONS!

Locals weigh in advocating for or against ballot items they are most passionate about. Consider their reasoning before heading to the polls Tuesday.

Page 10-18



#### AN EXTRA DAY!

Leap Day is on Thursday, Feb. 29. While February usually has 28 days (the shortest month of the year), every four years it gets an additional day, i.e. leap day or leap year.



#### SLASH AND BERM

The 10th annual Slash & Berm Banked Slalom hits Killington at the Stash terrain park.

Page 22

#### HEAD START EXPANDS

Rutland County Head Start expands its infants and toddlers program to provide quality early learning, healthcare, and nutrition support, funded by grants.

Page 35

## Rutland city to vote on fluoride, Aldermen

By Katy Savage

Rutland City voters will decide on whether to change the language of a charter to remove fluoride from the water on Town Meeting Day, March 5.

Residents and professionals had mixed emotions at a Jan. 29 public hearing.

Some residents said having fluoride in the city water is a violation of medical ethics, while dentists said having fluoride in water helps prevent tooth decay, particularly for those who can't otherwise afford dental care.

Joseph Errante, the vice president of provider network and clinical strategies at Northeast Delta Dental and a dentist of 45 years, said chronic tooth decay is a disease.

"This will end up being a catastrophe for the city of Rutland," Rutland ballot → 9

## Woodstock voters to decide on option tax

By Katy Savage

Woodstock residents will decide on an \$8.02 million budget on Town Meeting Day March 5, of which \$6.6 million is to be raised from taxes. The budget is up about 4% from last year and expected to increase taxes about 6%.

Voters will also decide on a 1% option tax. The tax would add 1% to the state's existing 6% sales tax and would apply to any purchases made in town or online.

The option tax was narrowly defeated 426-417 on Town Meeting Day in 2022.

Proponents of the tax say it would collect money for the town to use on future development projects, while others say Woodstock ballot → 9

## School districts grapple with last-minute changes to Act 127 and the effect on local tax capacity

By Erin Petenko/VTDigger and Polly Mikula

Rural areas of the state stand to gain the most from a new law that has changed the way students are counted for the statewide education fund, according to new Agency of Education data presented to lawmakers earlier this month.

However, in Rutland and Windsor County the four largest school districts: Rutland City, Slate Valley, Springfield and Otter Valley also all saw positive percent changes, meaning an increase to their share of the statewide total "weighted pupil" count and thus an increase in their "tax capacity" — a measure of what the statewide education fund will provide to a district for a given tax rate.

The local districts that lost the most capacity were Norwich at -19%, Rutland Town at -17% and Pittsfield at -8%.

For school districts and homestead property tax payers, Act 127 goes into effect for the first time this coming fiscal year — with votes for district budgets on many Town Meeting Day ballots, Tuesday, March 5.

Act 127, passed in 2022, is intended to even the playing field between districts by giving more weight to low-income Act 127 tax implications → 6



By Jaimie Ziobro

A rally for the \$99 million school bond was held Saturday on The Green in Woodstock.

## 'A perfect mess': School construction needs in a chaotic budget year

By Habib Sabet and Ethan Weinstein/VTDigger

In fall 2023, the leaders of the Milton Town School District unveiled the design for its new elementary and middle school (pre-K-8) at a cost of \$200 million, which gave the community pause, but it was the challenges of the current annual budget cycle that ultimately led the district to table the much-needed project this year.

Initial projections that indicated that property taxes could increase statewide by an average of 20% have the state and district school boards scrambling.

Some are also pointing fingers at Act 127, a new law taking effect this budget season that changes the way statewide education funding is distributed. Its purpose is, in short, to direct more funding to schools with pupils who are more expensive to teach, such as English language learners, rural students and students living in poverty. Coupled with the sharp rise in property values statewide over the last three years — which is reflected in a town-by-town tax rate adjustment called the Common Level of Appraisal, or CLA — many district boards are bracing for the public's reaction to eye-popping tax increases.

"To me it's just the perfect mess," said Amy Rex, superintendent of the Milton district.

"I mean with Act 127 and the CLA mess that exists right now and, you know, 20- to 40-cent increases on homestead tax rates, people don't even want to hear the word 'bond' — especially in this community," she said. "And I get that. I get it."

Milton is far from alone in choosing to continue to delay school upgrades. Last month, the Sharon School Board moved to

table a vote on a roughly \$10 million bond for security upgrades and other renovations on the Sharon Elementary School, citing uncertainty surrounding tax increases this year.

But a few districts are still moving forward, taking their chances because they feel they have no choice. In some locations, school leaders believe that major work can simply no longer be deferred.

One of them is Mountain Views Supervisory Union — composed of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading and Woodstock. That district ranked second worst in the state's recently completed facilities assessment.

"The skeptics' line is, 'you can't bank on [the idea] if we build it, they will come,'" Ford said. But countered: "We've already seen that if we don't build it, they will leave."

March 5 voters will be asked to decide whether to approve a \$99 million bond to fund the construction of a new school.

"We absolutely can't afford to wait," Ben Ford, a Mountain Views board member who's leading the school bond campaign, said in an interview, citing ever-growing construction costs. "We're not doing our students or our taxpayers any favors by continuing to wait."

#### 'If it were free we would rejoice'

Woodstock Union High School and Middle School first went into service in the late 1950s. Now, failing systems, the district mulled its options. It considered three possible School bonds → 7

## Killington Select Board Forum sparks contentious debate

By Sarah Calvin

On Wednesday, Feb. 21, the Killington Pico Area Association (KPAA) hosted a Select Board candidate forum for the public. Incumbent Jim Haff and challenger Andrew Gieda are vying for the open seat on the board and answered a series of questions, which they were given the day prior.

Around 25 people attended the forum in person. It was also livestreamed on Facebook where 38-46 more people watched live, and over 1,000 have watched since. The video is also available on PegTV. The candidates responded to a series of prepared questions.

Local businessman Andrew Gieda introduced himself as an educated immigrant who is willing to work for his dreams. Born in Belarus, Gieda first came to the U.S. as part of the J-1 work visa program, which allows foreign college students the opportunity to work in the U.S. during their summer break. After completing the program, Gieda matriculated into Castleton State College in 2005, graduating in 2009 with a degree

in business management. He currently is the owner of Killington-based home design company InStone Design.

Select Board incumbent Jim Haff opened with his love of skiing, citing Killington Resort as his initial reason to move to the area. Haff and his wife, a Rutland native, raised three daughters in Killington, all of whom now attend/attended Smith College in Massachusetts. Haff is a longtime local, having moved in 1997. He became interested in town government in 2006 and first ran for Select Board in 2010, serving three years.

He said he doesn't want to go back to the days when the town was divided "us versus them."

He currently also serves as the interim zoning administrator for the town.

When each candidate was asked why they are qualified to be on the Select Board, Gieda reiterated the importance of his college degree, also citing his background in construction as an aid to the town's Killington Forward initiative. Haff described his previous work with

the Killington Forward program and his previous nine years on the Select Board.

Gieda is running on a platform of change, seeking to energize Killington voters to rally around a fresh perspective. Haff is counting on his established track-record within the town and his previous work with local government as well as private-public partnerships to win him another term.

The next topic presented was the proposed municipal budget, which includes a 9% increase for FY2025.

Haff said he fully supports the budget, which sees a greater allotment for the Killington Fire Department. The fire department recently came under town control after asking for aid due to an increased call volume and waning volunteerism.

"[The Select Board] is making it so that this town is safe and there is a fire department here that can answer every call and get to your house," said Haff, adding that most of the calls are for the

Candidate forum → 8

## Age Strong Vermont releases 10-year plan

Roadmap was shaped by public input, focused on state resiliency

Vermont health officials announced the release of the Age Strong VT 10-Year Action Plan, a comprehensive roadmap designed to address the evolving needs of Vermont's aging population. The strategic plan, titled "Age Strong VT: A Vision for the Future," is the result of extensive public input.

The day the report was released, Feb. 22, was also designated as Age Strong Vermont Day by the General Assembly.

Vermont's older population is the state's fastest growing age group. By 2030, one in three Vermonters will be over the age of 60. As the state grapples with changing demographics, the Age Strong VT 10-Year Action Plan emerges as a vital tool, fostering optimism and providing a platform to prepare and build on the state's resiliency and strengths.

"From imagining the best of livable communities, to incorporating public health equity in all policies, this plan will be a valuable resource for communities, businesses, non-profits and state policy makers," said Health Commissioner Mark Levine.

By 2030, one in three Vermonters will be over the age of 60.

Public comments revealed a diverse range of perspectives. While some individuals expressed concerns about the economy and the affordability of living as they age — issues actively being addressed by the governor and state legislature — many others applauded the plan for its positive vision and strategic roadmap.

Noteworthy comments highlighted the plan's emphasis on leveraging the state's strengths, such as community connectedness, flexible transportation pilots, and inclusive arts and recreation programs catering to individuals of all ages.

The Age Strong VT Plan aligns with and supports key priorities to benefit everyone in Vermont, including:

1. Age-friendly housing: a future of affordable housing, convenient zoning, and infrastructure that supports aging in place, socialization, local business, and community health.
2. Continuing education: increasing access to adult learning opportunities for all generations, fostering mental and social engagement, and cognitive well-being beyond retirement.
3. Age-friendly health systems: Recognizing the importance of patient-centered care for older adults, Vermont hospitals, notably Grace Cottage Hospital, prioritize prevention and treatment of dementia.

"Age Strong VT includes strategies that will support Vermonters at all ages and stages of life, including inclusive transportation, accessible housing, opportunities for healthy choices, social connection, and more," said Megan Tierney-Ward, interim commissioner of the Dept. of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living. "By proactively building more age-friendly programs, services and communities we will build a resilient Vermont for everyone."

Looking ahead, the Age Strong VT steering committee is set to meet with state leadership this spring to discuss avenues for successful plan implementation and monitoring. Simultaneously, the committee will monitor ongoing plan activities and create an Age Strong Vermont dashboard to share progress with the public.

Age Strong VT invites people to join in the ongoing conversation as the plan unfolds to ensure a vibrant future for all.

For more information or to read the full action plan, visit: [HealthVermont.gov/AgeStrongVT](https://HealthVermont.gov/AgeStrongVT).

## KMS student Pippa Scott aims to raise awareness of teen suicide

By Chelsea Pond

*The Community News Service is a program in which University of Vermont students work with professional editors to provide content for local news outlets at no cost.*

On Sunday, Feb. 18, a frigid and snowy night at the Killington Grand Hotel, non-profit organization Ride for Mental Health held an event to raise money and educate attendees about the importance of mental health.

The organization, started by 17-year-old Killington Mountain School student Pippa Scott, aims to prevent suicide, remove the stigma associated with mental health and openly talk to kids who are struggling. Scott was driven to create the organization after losing three of her teammates over the years to suicide.

The main event was a presentation from Scott, that she said she wanted "to be more like a conversation."

She proceeded to create a very personal and peaceful environment, asking the audience questions and having people raise their hand if they could relate or agree with what she was saying.

People shared their stories about the effects of mental health and suicide. One crowd member shared how their co-workers have died by suicide, while another shared the effect their job has on their mental health.

Scott then emphasized the importance of mental health awareness, especially in teenagers. She shared that suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10 to 34 in the U.S., and that nearly 20% of high school students report serious consideration of suicide within a 12-month period. On top of that, Scott stated that 95% of teenagers

have access to a smartphone leading to increasing social media pressure and cyberbullying.

"Now, the simplest [solution] I can see for this is for everyone to throw out their phones and not use social media. That solves nothing, because that will never happen—it is super unrealistic," Scott said. "We need to make social media a more positive place for people to talk. We need to make it so that there aren't unrealistic goals via Photoshop and you're not only posting the best parts of your life."

As a KMS athlete herself, Scott also spoke to mental health in sports, including the pressure to succeed and the sense of failure when you don't, the connection athletes have to their sport and the impact it can have when they are not able to compete. To Scott, one of the most crucial pieces of this is speaking with and educating coaches about mental health.

"We tend to spend so much time talking to coaches because they're the ones who are with the athletes the most.

They're the ones who are seeing when their athletes are pushing themselves to the limit," Scott said, adding, "educating coaches can save so many lives."

When asked about the future of the organization, Scott spoke of the struggles of fundraising with a small non-profit.

"Nobody really wants to give money to a small non-profit," Scott said.

Despite that, she has plans to focus on expanding and talking with bigger brands that have to do with mental health.

For more information, visit the Ride for Mental Health website at: [rideformh.org](https://rideformh.org).



By Chelsea Pond  
*Pippa Scott, a Killington Mountain School student, speaks at Killington's Grand Hotel about teen suicide.*



Courtesy the Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Top: Barrier tape marks the limits of the construction site. Bottom left: Stone or rock check dams slow erosion in drainage channels. Bottom right: Filter socks (a manufactured tube filled with shredded material) slow stormwater runoff on long open slopes.

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## MOUNTAIN TIMES

*is a community newspaper covering Central Vermont that aims to engage and inform as well as empower community members to have a voice.*

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# State reminder: Spring construction projects must take measures to protect clean water

## All projects over 1 acre require additional state permits

With spring construction season ahead, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) wants to remind Vermonters about additional requirements to help protect the state's waterways.

"We understand that managing construction sites to protect water quality is a year-round challenge," said DEC Commissioner Jason Batchelder. "Using measures that reduce erosion and keep soil on construction sites helps us protect Vermont's waterways and their many benefits."

Construction activities may require a Vermont Construction General

Permit 3-9020 when the total land disturbance is:

- Equal to or greater than 1 acre, or
- Less than 1 acre – but is part of a larger common plan of development – if the larger development will ultimately result in the disturbance of 1 or more acres.

Permittees must have a site-specific Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control (EPSC) plan or otherwise comply with the Site Handbook for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control, if applicable. Marking con-

struction limits of disturbance, installing best management practices, and promptly stabilizing disturbed areas ensures the protection of Vermont's surface waters.

"Permittees help us not only reduce erosion but also cut costs to maintain infrastructure such as road ditches and storm sewers," said Batchelder. "Our department offers resources to help Vermonters understand the full suite of measures, follow the permit requirements, and protect our remarkable surface waters from streams and rivers to ponds, lakes, and wetlands."

*For more info, visit [dec.vermont.gov](http://dec.vermont.gov).*

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# Census captures changes in Vermont agriculture

By Dr. Vern Grubinger, UVM extension vegetable and berry specialist

The first Census of Agriculture was conducted in 1840, when Vermont produced 3.7 million pounds of wool from 1.7 million sheep, and just \$1.4 million of milk. Since then, data collected at regular intervals has documented ongoing, often dramatic, changes in farming.

The most recent census, taken in 2022, was just released this month. The 475-page Vermont report describes the products, land and people that comprise its farm community, which now produces just 72,813 pounds of wool from 17,888 sheep and \$599 million of milk.

Vermont has 6,537 farms, down 4% from 2017. The state has 1,173,890 acres of farmland, but lost 19,547 acres since 2017, presumably to development. These declines are attributable in part to the loss of 313 dairy farms over the same five years, a drop of 37%.

The number of milk cows declined less, by 18%, to 105,514. The fluid milk produced by the remaining 528 cow dairies accounts for 58% of all agricultural sales in Vermont. Furthermore, there are 265,275 forage acres, 110,962 pasture acres and 74,800 corn silage acres, most of which feed cows.

This data shows how important dairy is to Vermont's agricultural economy and landscape.

Looking back 20 years, to the 2002 Census, Vermont had 6,571 farms, about the same as today, but 1,508 were dairies. So nearly 1,000 farms have shifted from

dairy to other products, making agriculture more diverse.

Vermont now has 744 farms selling vegetables and 471 farms selling berries. There are 507 farms in the greenhouse and nursery business, 441 orchards and 266 farms selling Christmas trees.

Vermont has 1,345 farms with laying hens, 222 farms selling chickens and 123 raise turkeys. There are 1,526 farms with beef cows, 1,012 farms with horses, 419 farms with goats and 300 farms with pigs.

Vermont leads the nation in maple production. Its 1,433 sugarmakers produced 3.1 million gallons of syrup worth \$112 million from 8.5 million

taps. That's a big increase from 2 million gallons worth \$58 million, gathered from 5.9 million taps in 2017.

Most farms in Vermont, and across the country, are small. The census requires only \$1,000 in annual agricultural sales to qualify as a farm. Over half of Vermont's farms sell less than \$10,000 of products a year, and only 19% of farms report sales over \$100,000.

The average sales per farm is \$159,373, but only 43% of farms report net gains.

Vermont agriculture may be diverse, but it is also consolidated. Just 3% of farms account for two-thirds of all agricultural sales.

Importantly, farms provide more value than just the food they produce, or the money they make. Vermont has 1,461

Vermont's agriculture is growing. Sales of farm products now exceed one billion dollars, up by 32% since 2017.

Census of Ag → 5

# Alternative to new build was presented to Killington Select Board

By Curt Peterson

The \$99,000,000 bond for a middle/high school in Woodstock is not the only option, according to Killington Selectman Jim Haff.

Four years ago a much less expensive proposal was presented to the Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU), that would have fixed many of its failing systems and extended the useful life of the building 15-20 years, according to the proposal made by Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI). Haff invited Dean Angelites of JCI to the regular Killington Select Board meeting, Monday, Feb. 26, to show the board and voting public that option.

Killington is one of seven sending towns to MVSU - Bridgewater, Pomfret, Barnard, Woodstock, Plymouth and Reading, the other district members. The \$99 million bond is on the school district ballot, March 5, Town Meeting Day.

Haff believes the current new build proposal is too expensive - and too small.

This is the first year in 16 that Haff has not been on the district school board. He was most recently also the chair of the buildings and grounds committee.

He worked closely with JCI on the \$10 million

proposal, which included upgrades and efficiencies to all the existing building in the districts - the middle school/high school as well as the elementary schools.

"The 'New Build' committee turned our suggestions down flat," Haff said. "The 'New Build' committee said they wouldn't put another penny into the existing facility."

Ben Ford, vice-chair of the MVSU board and chair of the New Build committee told the Mountain Times investing millions of dollars in renovating the existing building would just add that much to the total cost when the new building is constructed, one reason the

much of the incentive savings available 4 or 5 years ago are now gone, and the cost for a full renovation would be upwards of \$35 million-\$45 million, he contended: "The renovations would have provided a bigger, better school for half the proposed cost of new construction. And we can still do it."

Haff also questioned the MVSU projection for the tax impact of the \$99 million bond.

"There's no way there will be 'no payments' due for the first three years," Haff said.

According to Ford, the bond bank terms include a statutory delay in payments for up to five years. "We plan

"Whatever we proposed, the New Build people just kept shutting us down," Haff said. "They made it clear," he said. "They wanted a new building, no matter what."

proposal was rejected.

While the original \$10 million plan was rejected, a smaller \$3 million plan from JCI has been implemented in the elementary schools. And a new propane heating system was installed at the middle school/high school.

While Angelites said

to delay only three years," Ford said.

"Whatever we proposed, the New Build people just kept shutting us down," Haff said, "they made it clear: They wanted a new building, no matter what."

As the MVSU New Build Alternative → 8

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# Young writers challenged to tell a story in just two sentences

The Children’s Literacy Foundation (CLiF) announced the launch of its second annual Two-Sentence Writing Contest on Feb. 22. Open to all Vermont and New Hampshire children aged 12 and under, the contest is free to enter, and prizes will be awarded to top submissions in each of four categories.

This year’s contest challenges young writers to “tell a two-sentence story that takes place in the sky.” Loosely tied to the upcoming total eclipse on April 8, 2024, the contest draws inspiration from the stories and legends ancient civilizations invented to explain sky phenomena.

CLiF’s inaugural Two-Sentence Writing Contest, held last year in February 2023, asked young writers to tell a story about winter, and drew over 700 submissions from across the Twin States.

“The range of creative expression demonstrated by the stories was truly amazing,” said CLiF Project Specialist Mary Edith Leichter. “With just two sentences to work with, it’s incredible what kids can come up with. We had comedy, horror, tragedy, sci-fi...you name it. We can’t wait to read the stories generated by this year’s theme!”

The categories for this year’s contest are divided as follows: Kindergarten and younger; grades 1 and 2; grades 3 and 4; and grades 5 and 6. The winner of each category will receive a five-book library from CLiF, curated to their age and interests.

A downloadable entry template can be found by visiting: [clifonline.org/writing-contest-2024](http://clifonline.org/writing-contest-2024). Entries must be received by email ([communications@clifonline.org](mailto:communications@clifonline.org)) or mail (CLiF Writing Contest, 3579 Waterbury-Stowe Road, Waterbury Center, VT 05677) by March 29, 2024. Winners will be announced in early April.

For more information, visit [clifonline.org](http://clifonline.org).

## ← Census of Ag: ..... from page 4

farms with solar panels, generating renewable energy. The state also boasts 797 farms with 143,774 acres under conservation easement, protecting farmland for the future.

Additionally, 323 farms engaged in agritourism attract visitors from near and far. And the state gains a modicum of food self-reliance from 1,639 farms that sell \$42 million of products direct to consumers, and 1,066 farms that sell \$101 million of products to retail stores and institutions. Together they account for 14% of all farm sales.

Vermont’s agriculture is growing. Sales of farm products now exceed one billion dollars, up by 32% since 2017. The state has 12,470 farmers (41% are women), about the same as five years ago, but their average age increased from 55.9 to 57.7 years old. During that time, the state lost 1.6% of its farmland.

Policies that could help the future of farming in Vermonter include: helping to lower the average age of farmers by attracting and supporting more new farmers; slowing the loss of farmland with more land conservation and forward-looking land use policies; and improving farmers’ income by buying more of their products.

For more information, visit: [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

Just 3% of farms account for two-thirds of all agricultural sales.



# 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?

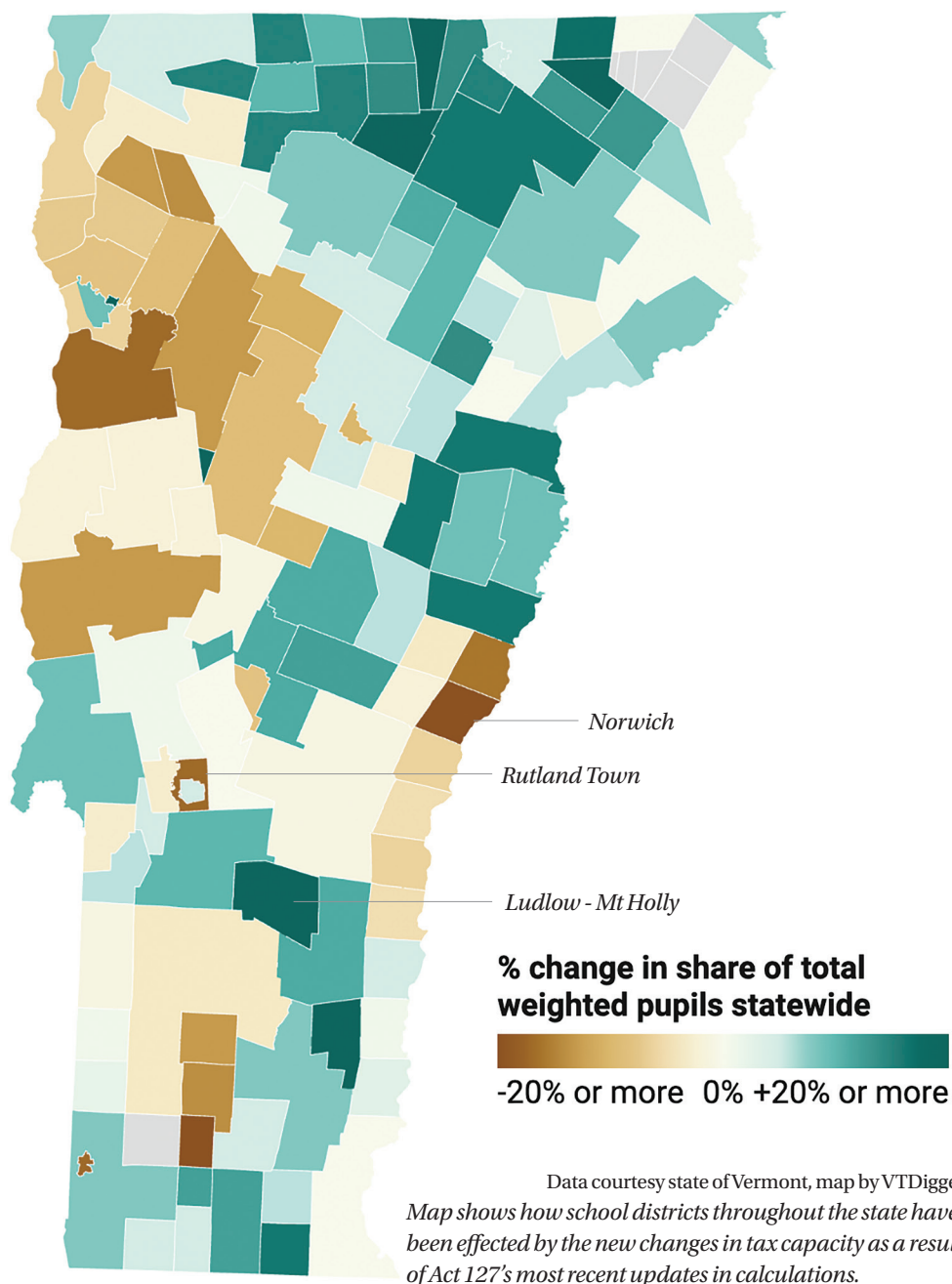
Dated at Killington, Vermont this 22 day of January 2024.

Stephen Finneron

Jim Haff

Christopher Karr

District name	Change
Norwich	-19%
Rutland Town	-17%
Pittsfield	-8%
Mt. Ascutney SD	-6%
Hartford	-6%
Hartland	-5%
Weathersfield	-5%
Quarry Valley UUSD	-3%
Sharon	-2%
Metawee School District	-1%
Mountain Views School District	-1%
Barstow UUSD	0%
Otter Valley UUSD	1%
Rutland City	5%
Springfield	5%
Ira	5%
First Branch USD	6%
Wells Spring Unified Union District	6%
Slate Valley UUSD	9%
Mill River UUSD	10%
Rochester-Stockbridge USD	11%
Green Mountain USD	11%
White River Unified District	12%
Ludlow - Mt. Holly UUSD	18%



**Act 127 tax implications:**  
 from page 1

students, English language learners and students at rural schools, on the understanding that these groups are more expensive to educate.

Every year, towns in Vermont send money raised through property taxes to the state education fund. The fund in turn distributes money back out to school districts to pay a large portion of the annual school budgets approved by each school districts' voters.

The Agency of Education recently provided data to legislators on how every school district's share of weighted pupils statewide has changed as a result of Act 127.

It's complicated, but this change in weighted pupil share directly impacts homestead property taxes.

A school district's budget drives the homestead tax rate up or down in a given year based on the district's education spending per "weighted pupil," a count arrived at by multiplying the weights assigned to certain categories of students by the district's number of students in those categories. (For non-homestead properties, a category that includes properties owned by businesses, rental units and second homes, this is less relevant. That's because the Legislature sets one tax rate — before a town-level adjustment called the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) — to meet the remaining education spending needs.)

The new pupil weighting system in Act 127 means that for almost every district, its share of the total weighted pupils statewide has changed. Towns that have increased their share of the statewide total "weighted pupil" count now have higher tax capacity, and those that have had their share reduced now have lower tax capacity.

A gain in tax capacity means that school districts will receive more funding for the same tax rate — or a lower tax rate for the same funding level. Decreased tax capacity means districts will need a higher tax rate to receive the same funding level or will receive reduced funding for the same tax rate.

Act 127, when it was originally passed, had contained a provision intended to make the phase-in of these changes more gradual by capping the amount that any district's home-

The local districts that lost the most capacity were Norwich at -19%, Rutland Town at -17% and Pittsfield at -8%.

stead tax rate could go up each year at 5% for the next five years. But a large jump in staff health care costs and the loss of Covid-19 pandemic-era federal funding, among other factors, has led all school districts in the state to propose budgets that increase education spending by an average of almost 15% over the current year.

Due to these unique circumstances, every district in the state would exceed the cap, according to recent calculations by the Agency of Education. As a result, if the cap remained in place, tax rates for non-homestead properties would skyrocket.

In recent weeks, lawmakers have raced to repeal the 5% cap and put a new transition mechanism into law. The House approved a bill, H.850, to do that on Feb. 14, then Senate passed it on Feb. 21, and the governor promptly signed it on Feb. 22.

The new mechanism will provide a 1-cent discount on a district's homestead tax rate (per \$100 in property value) for every percentage loss in its share of statewide weighted pupils. The discount would be reduced by 20% over each of the next five years. Only tax rates for residents of school districts that lost weighted pupil share due to Act 127 will receive the adjustment.

So, for example, the Norwich school district in the Upper Valley is among those that lost the most tax capacity, with a 19% loss in its share of the state's weighted pupils. The new transition mechanism would reduce that district's pre-CLA homestead property tax rate by 19 cents this year, 15.2 cents next year and so on.

The impact of these changes will be blunted somewhat for the roughly two-thirds of homestead property taxpayers with annual household incomes below a limit, set this year at \$128,000. Those taxpayers are eligible for a property tax credit of up to \$8,000 depending on their income and the value of their property.

The law also now allows school districts to revise their budgets and push back their annual meetings, in which they are considered by voters, until April 15, if necessary.

Ethan Weinstein and Kristen Fountain from VTDigger contributed reporting.



# Governor Scott signs education financing bill H.850

## Warns Legislature: more work is needed to control costs

Governor Phil Scott signed H.850, an act relating to transitioning education financing to the new system for pupil weighting, on Thursday, Feb. 22. The new law seeks to reduce property tax increases this year, which could reach 20% without action by local school districts, according to Scott.

When signing the bill, Governor Scott warned that the changes would not themselves solve the education funding increases in a letter to the General Assembly.

“To be clear, this bill does not solve our property tax problem,” Scott wrote. “These changes will only reduce rates if school boards adjust their budgets accordingly and local voters support those changes. It’s also important to note the projected spending increase this year is \$243 million, so even if every single school board makes adjustments to their budget, we’re unlikely to avoid significant property tax increases. And we should not ignore how difficult the choices that some communities will have to make around staffing, program offerings, and services.”

“What that means is our work in this area has just begun, which is exactly the same thing I said when I signed S.287 of 2022 — the bill that enacted the 5% cap H.850 repeals. In that same signing letter, I said ‘We also know this bill risks further increasing the cost of our education system

“I called on the Legislature to address the cost pressures this bill added — and avoid adding more costs — ‘before this new formula takes effect,’” Scott wrote in a letter to the General Assembly.

in a way that compounds these underlying [inequity] issues — particularly if we continue to see fewer and fewer students alongside annual school budget growth of 3%-4%, on average.’ I called on the Legislature to address the cost pressures this bill added — and avoid adding more costs — ‘before this new formula takes effect,’” Scott’s letter to the General Assembly continued.

“Had the Legislature worked with me to do so, we would all be in a better place to-

H.850 → 17

## ← Candidate forum: from page 2

departments EMT services, not fire, “85% of our calls are emergency calls for health, not fire,” he said.

When asked the same question, Gieda called the town budget “incorrect and illegal” as the budget includes salary increases for town employees and Haff, who himself is employed by the town, did not abstain from voting.

Haff rebutted that the town got legal advice on that matter and because it was a 3% raise across the board for all employees, it was not a special consideration.

Gieda feels there is a widespread “lack of accountability” amongst town governments, and thinks allowing employees to vote on their own pay is an ethical violation. He furthered his point by holding up a clear plastic water bottle and a soda bottle, comparing himself to the clear bottle and Haff to the soda bottle and calling for greater transparency within local politics.

Haff responded by citing the town’s public notices in advance of meetings and the ability to listen in via Zoom as well. The candidates traded cutting remarks, with Gieda recounting an experience in which he felt he was kept out of what should have been public proceedings and Haff suggesting Gieda doesn’t understand how government works. The debate was subsequently moved along by the moderator, who asked the candidates what their priorities for the town would be should they be elected.

“My priorities [are] to make sure that Killington Forward keeps on going forward,” said Haff, referring to plans that include constructing a new municipal water system, extensive road reconstruction and a workforce housing development, which will also support Great Gulf’s new resort village (the increment tax of which pays for the majority of those plans). “This town has a lot of issues going in front of it, especially with our tax rates.”

Gieda responded, “My number one priority is to bring back the volunteers [and] lower our fire department budget. We have to watch our expenses, we have to be efficient.”

Gieda emphasized he’d like to see Great

Gulf begin breaking ground on their development at Killington Resort’s Snowshed and Ramshead base area so the town could see some income from the project as soon as possible. After that happens, he said, he’d be open to the town government expanding, but would prefer to keep costs low for townspeople until the project can generate some revenue.

When asked what he thinks Killington does best, Gieda recalled the immediate outpouring of aid and donations his neighbor received

Both candidates also discussed the obstacles the town faces... The biggest issue put forth was the question of the proposed new building at Woodstock High School.

when her house burned down, and held up a Vermont Strong license plate, reminding the audience how the community came together during Hurricane Irene in 2011 and again during the flooding this past summer.

Both candidates also discussed the obstacles the town faces, such as lack of affordable housing, expensive tax rates, and the absence of a unified municipal water system.

The biggest issue put forth was the question of the proposed new building at Woodstock High School. Haff is against the construction of a completely new building.

“We can’t afford the school as a new school,” he said. “Where is that money going to come from? I’m for a new school if we can get other schools to close, so I am for a new building but not for 600 [students].”

“We can’t spend the money we don’t have,” Gieda agreed. “In Europe, some buildings can be 300 years old and they’re still standing. [This plan is to] demolish a building and spend \$100 million plus. My kid might go there in 10 years, but then, am I going to be still around? I can’t afford to live here, that’s the reason I’m running. Everything is [becoming too expensive] and it’s pushing us locals out of here.”

To view the recording of the entire debate, visit [pegtu.com](http://pegtu.com).

## ← Alternative: from page 4

committee toured district towns promoting the new building plan prior to the Town Meeting Day vote, the state is making moves to re-establish support for infrastructure financing.

Ford said the state’s Task Force for School Construction Aid has “pre-approved” state funding for up to 30% of the bond, should it be reinstated. According to Ford, the district’s architect has been working with the Task Force and feels they are “very serious” about

restarting the program.

Haff pointed out that the state’s approval came with the statement that the per-student square-footage of the project was 30% too large.

“Jim is correct,” Ford said, “but that’s by standards established in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, modern special education requirements include one-on-one tutoring in an enclosed room. Those old limitations are being reviewed on a rush basis.”

Haff, also questioned the committee’s claims, saying

he thinks the new campus will attract more students, calling it an unreasonable expectation.

Ford said the district has gained 150 students in the first six grades in the past two years — illustrating that growth estimates are reasonable.

Haff counted, “But the total student enrollment has actually decreased from 1,060 to 1,000 per the district’s current data — a loss of 60 students since 2021,” he giggled, pointing to the school report.



# SCOTT BAUGHMAN

## WRITE-IN CANDIDATE

For Sherburne Riverside Cemetery Commissioner

**ELECTION DAY**  
March 5, 2024

The current cemetery commissioners, **Truman Bates** and **Paul Holmes**, fully support Scott’s candidacy and request that you write-in **“Scott Baughman for Cemetery Commissioner”** on the Town of Killington ballot.

Thank You



# Difficult choices

It was widely known that putting together the next state budget was going to be tight. All the extra federal money that came to Vermont during the pandemic, has previously been appropriated and state revenue growth has slowed. The governor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (beginning July 1, 2024) had an overall increase in ongoing spending of approximately 3.4%, which is less than what wages and benefits are increasing for state employees.



By Rep. Jim Harrison

In outlining his budget plan earlier this session, Governor Scott said we must live within our means and resist the temptation by some to raise taxes. If seniors on social security are expected to get by with the 3.2% cost of living adjustment this year, our state government should be able to do the same.

One of the reductions suggested in the administration's proposed budget is to close the fish hatchery in Salisbury. The planned closing of the historic hatchery, which produces about five million trout eggs annually for other hatcheries, has raised the ire of sportsmen groups around the state. State officials indicate keeping the facility open beyond 2027 could result in a costly upgrade (\$10 million) to install new treatment measures to meet the state's water quality standards.

Members of the Appropriations Committee have probably received more emails concerning this budget item than any other thus far this session, all of which oppose the closing. Most of the messages close with this note, "With all the money being spent elsewhere, we should support this facility." Of course, when a cut to another program is proposed, another group says, "not so fast." Difficult choices are ahead.

To further add to the budget pressures:

- The state has millions in flood related costs from last summer;
- Over \$70 million in requests from last week's public hearing on the budget; and
- A proposal for nearly \$200 million annually to build more affordable housing.

And before we even begin crafting the House version of the FY25 budget, the Legislature developed a \$15 million shortfall through extra expenditures in the current year budget adjustment bill.

To say that the next few weeks will be challenging is an understatement.

On Friday, the House Appropriations Chair asked committee members to look at our respective budget areas over the weekend and come up with some proposed reductions.

More difficult choices will also face school boards and voters in the coming weeks as property taxes are expected to dramatically increase, even for those that have received tax credits based on income in the past.

The governor has signed into law H.850, which removes the 5% cap on homestead property tax rates many believed led to higher education budgets and gives districts more time to prepare and adopt school budgets this year.

Upon signing the legislation, Scott said, "But to be clear, this bill does not solve our property tax problem. These changes will only reduce rates if school boards adjust their budgets accordingly..."

Key lawmakers, including Senate leader Phil Baruth, acknowledged that the Legislature needs to come up with "groundbreaking" ways to contain pre-K to 12 education costs. Will it happen this year is an open question.

**Other issues of interest:**

- A significant new and controversial renewable energy bill is expected to be voted on by the full House in the coming week. The legislation, H.289, requires most of the state's electricity to come from 100% renewable sources by 2030, with an emphasis on locally based sources, such as solar and wind. Current law requires 75% renewable by 2032. The estimated additional costs to ratepayers are between \$400 million and \$1 billion over the next 11 years according to the nonpartisan Joint Fiscal Office of the Legislature. The Dept. of Public Service offered an alternative plan to achieve 100% at a lower cost but it was opposed by the groups advocating for local energy providers.
- A bill, S.18, to ban flavored tobacco, including menthol, was advanced by the House Ways & Means Committee on Friday on a 7-5 vote after it was amended to postpone implementation for another year. The motivation for the delay is to avoid an estimated \$10-15 million deficit

Harrison → 16

# Select Board candidate questions personal property tax as an on-your-honor town-by-town revenue source

By Curt Peterson

When Select Board candidate Andrew Gieda confronted current board members about Killington's personal property tax at a recent public meeting, it garnered attention.

Gieda claimed a large percentage of eligible Killington businesses were not filing their "personal property tax" reports, and that the self-reporting process encouraged filers to minimize their obligation. He challenged the selectmen to do something about "the large amount of revenue" the town is missing due to lack of compliance and enforcement.

There is a Vermont personal property tax that applies to business tangible assets. According to Hartland Board of Listers Chair Stacy Bradley, the tax had existed in all Vermont

Personal property tax → 15

## ← Rutland ballot: ..... from page 1

he said, explaining most dentists in the area are nearly 70 years old and there may not be enough dentists to meet the future demand. The fluoride issue appeared on the ballot back in 2016, when about 60% of residents rejected the charter change.

"It costs money for people who don't want it in their water to remove it from the water and I think it's unfair to put the onus on the people who don't want it in their water," said Lopi Laroe, a local artist in Rutland.

### Budget up 7%

Voters will also decide on a \$25,128,435 city budget, which is up about 7% from last year's \$23,261,061 budget.

Most of the increase comes from an 18% salary increase for police.

### Seven Aldermen candidates

There are seven candidates running for five seats on the Rutland City Board of Aldermen. Larry Cupoli and Cheryl Hooker aren't seeking reelection while incumbents Sharon Davis, Anna Tadio, and Michael Talbott will appear on the ballot again.

Matt Whitcomb, who previously served on the board, is also running again, along with political newcomer Eddie Grove, former City Clerk Henry Heck and Bob Pearo Jr.

The candidates appeared at a forum recorded by PegTV on Feb. 21

Davis, who has served on the board for 34 years, said she brings "a check and balance to the board."

Davis said she's concerned about the

growing tax rate in the city and crime.

Talbott, a communication professor at Castleton University, has served two terms on the board and spent the last year as the president. He moved to Rutland 10 years ago, explaining Rutland offered him the best quality of life.

"My number one priority is housing," said Talbot.

Whitcomb, who previously served on the board for five years, works as a senior health-care administrator. Whitcomb is hoping to rejoin the Aldermen to focus on policing issues.

"We have to figure out how to recruit and retain officers," he said.

Grove said this is his first time running for office. He works as a graphic designer and is an avid mountain biker who moved to town last year from Maryland.

Grove said he's running to be a "positive change for the community... Hopefully the ideas I have are good at that," he said.

Heck, a lifelong Vermont resident, was on the board for three years prior to 2007, when he became the city town clerk.

Heck was ousted from the clerk position after a political clash with newly elected Mayor Mike Doenges last March.

Heck said his extensive knowledge about the city and elections would benefit the city.

Tadio, who grew up in Rutland, works as an attorney in Rutland City and is seeking re-election.

## ← Woodstock ballot: ..... from page 1

the tax could deter shoppers.

### Board seats

While there are no contested Select Board seats, Laura Powell and Scott Smith are competing for a one-year term on the School Board.

Powell, an active volunteer and current Select Board member, is not seeking reelection for Select Board. Powell also serves on the planning commission.

Smith is the owner of Red Wagon Toy Company in Woodstock.

Jill Davies, an active volunteer and founder of the Woodstock Community Trust and Lauren Thompson, the controller at Woodstock Inn and Resort, are competing for a

three-year trustee of public funds seat.

### Potential costs ahead

Two other big-budget items could impact Woodstock taxpayers later this year. The wastewater treatment plant, which dates back to the 1960s, is deteriorating, and a bond to repair it could cost around \$25 million.

Voters could also decide to purchase the privately owned Woodstock Aqueduct Company.

The aqueduct company, which serves nearly 800 customers in Woodstock, currently has water pressure issues that have slowed development in town and impacted fire hydrants.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

## Get out there and vote

By Sarah Copeland Hanzas

*Editor's note: Sarah Copeland Hanzas is Vermont's 39th Secretary of State. She was a teacher, coach, small business owner and an 18-year member of the Vermont House before being elected as Secretary of State in 2022.*

As Vermont's Secretary of State and Chief Elections Officer, it's my job to help sustain and defend democracy — the form of government in which we the people choose our leaders and decide issues by voting. I believe that democracy must not only be defended, our participation in it must be grown, which is why I'm focused on engaging and empowering Vermonters to vote in our upcoming March 5th elections.

When polls close on March 5th, we will begin tallying votes on issues as lofty as who Vermont wants to nominate to be our next president and as close to home as who will be our next school director or Select Board member. And while TV, radio, and news media are saturated with coverage of presidential campaigns, the issues you see on your Town Meeting ballot will have a much more immediate impact on your community.

Will the voters choose to purchase a new fire truck? Will our budget cover the cost of after school programs for our children? Will we put a new roof on our library? How much will we raise in taxes to pay for these investments?

Democracy is about people. It is about voters and citizens of course, but it's also about the workers, volunteers, and other participants that make the systems of democracy work. Municipal clerks are the keystone of our democracy, and their communities count on them to support the whole process! Your Board of Civil Authority (BCA) plays a critical role in maintaining the integrity of elections, while poll workers and other volunteers make sure Election Day runs smoothly, ballots get counted, and every eligible Vermonter has the opportunity to vote.

As you exercise your right to vote — whether filling out your ballot at home or voting in-person at your town's floor meeting or at the polls — take a minute to appreciate all the people and systems that make it possible. We can't take the right, or the people and systems, for granted!

If all you listen to is national media, or rarely stray beyond the social media algorithm that feeds you news as you scroll, you might believe that the fabric of civic life is fraying. On some days, disheartened, I can see why people say that.

But then I spend an afternoon with a town clerk who is dedicated to their community, with a classroom full of engaged students in a high school social studies class, with a citizen legislator in the halls of the State House talking about a constituent concern, or with the passionate host of a community access television station, and I am re-energized and re-focused.

I ask you to look for instances where democracy is working in your everyday life and cherish it: a notice of a public hearing; the Front Porch Forum posting about a local candidate; a letter to the editor in the paper from one of your neighbors; or a bustling town clerk's office.

Vermonters care deeply about their neighbors and their communities. In the run-up to March 5th, I encourage you to make a plan to vote. Take advantage of the budget

Vote → 16

If there is any place in America where people can come together across divides to solve problems, it is Vermont. And this gives me hope.

## ALABAMA COURT: FROZEN EMBRYOS ARE CHILDREN



## LETTERS

## A school for everyone

Dear Editor,

My name is Elizabeth Wellington and I live in South Pomfret. My husband and I grew up in the Upper Valley and we moved here to raise a family in this community. I'm voting YES for our new Woodstock middle/high school.

As a relative newcomer to our area, it's been a joy to discover each town's local character on foot and through conversations. Pomfret is different from Reading; so are the needs of its people. God bless those differences and the nuances of this place.

Each of our school board members reflect these differences. They have varying backgrounds, priorities, life experiences, occupations and educations. Some grew up here. Some did not. The overwhelming majority do not live in "town" but out in the hills and the valleys. I doubt they saw eye to eye over the details of the new school proposal. How could they all, given the breadth and depth of difference across our communities?

School for all → 16

## Working together

Dear Editor,

In regards to building a new middle school/high school, many are asking how we can all work together to meet the needs of our students now and in the future, as well as take into consideration the concerns of taxpayers who may already be at their financial limits. Here are several ideas on how to move forward.

I believe it is our responsibility and that now is our time to invest in our future as a community

1. As for meeting the needs of students now and in the future, I have done a lot of research and now realize that we must vote "Yes" for a new school. The current school is beyond its useful life and systems are failing (full disclosure:

Together → 13

## Three reasons I'm voting 'Yes' for the new school build

Dear Editor,

As a full-time Killington resident, here are three reasons why I'm voting for the new school build.

First, the time is now. As others have indicated in previous letters, seven years of school boards have been working on this project. Over the course of that time, volunteer school board members, community members, and professional architects and builders have worked together to create the plan, gather feedback, edit, iterate, and share along the way. When I first heard of the plans for a new school build in 2018, I had just returned to the area. I was in the process of shifting from a career in education to a career in childhood development and adversity research and was trying to find ways to reengage with the community that I love. The plans that I saw at that point were impressive, and it made sense to me that it was time for a new school based on the dire state of the current school and the impracticality of renovating.

Since 2018, I personally have bought a house in Killington, continued my career in research, met and married my husband, opened a business in Rutland, and, like everyone else reading this, dealt with a global pandemic and the ongoing aftermath. That is all to say that a lot can happen in seven years! And yes, the cost to build a new school has increased over the last 7 years, as the cost to build and/or renovate almost anything has increased in that time span, but it is still in line with other current and recent school projects across the state. In fact, the cost per square foot (\$627/SF) for this building comes in under the average cost per square foot for current and recent school projects across Vermont, the average being \$713/SF.

Second, students, and their teachers, are worth it! I worked in education for eight years in a handful of different public schools in New Hampshire. I've had the experience of teaching

Three reasons → 16

## CAPITOL QUOTES

The Supreme Court wrestled with a pair of cases that could help define the future of the Internet, Monday, Feb. 26. Legal experts say they're the most important First Amendment cases in a generation. The question is whether states like Florida and Texas can force big social media platforms to carry content the platforms find hateful or objectionable.

**"I wonder, since we're talking about the First Amendment, whether our first concern should be with the state regulating what, you know, we have called the modern public square?"**

asked Chief Justice **John Roberts**.

**"The arguments today demonstrate many of the justices' awareness that while these state laws have significant problems, allowing the companies to escape any kind of regulation would create severe democratic challenges,"**

said **Gautam Hans**, associate director of Cornell Law School's First Amendment Clinic, in a statement.

**"Because the covered platforms' only products are displays of expressive content, a government requirement that they display different content — for example, by including content they wish to exclude or organizing content in a different way — plainly implicates the First Amendment,"**

said Solicitor General **Elizabeth Prelogar** according to the court in a filing.

**"If Big Tech censors enforce rules inconsistently, to discriminate in favor of the dominant Silicon Valley ideology, they will now be held accountable,"**

said Florida Gov. **Ron DeSantis** in a statement issued when he signed the Florida bill.

## LETTERS

### Why building a new school is easier on taxpayers vs. renovating

Dear Editor,

Vermont's school financing system is incredibly complex, and that means it can be difficult to make a decision that you feel good about. No one wants to spend money if it's not essential.

The question is, how do we know what's essential and what's not? It's not an easy thing to answer.

The challenge is that in order to make a decision you feel good about, you need to understand some of the com-

plexity around the bond and the way this state approaches education financing. This letter is my attempt to provide voters with the information you need, as simply as possible. I've worked with

Build new → 18

### We all win with a new school

Dear Editor,

I join my friends and neighbors to vote "Yes" on Article 7, the new school bond. I was initially skeptical but changed my mind for several reasons.

The new school is a bargain. It will cost less than maintaining the old one, which is already inadequate and beyond repair, and it will cost far less than if we delay.

The new school is designed for a wide range of learning. It will include spaces for arts, sciences, performing arts, agricultural sciences, and athletics.

The new school is safer. The old one was designed without proper ventilation or fire suppression, and before the unthinkable became all too familiar.

The new school will benefit the entire community. New construction means local contracts, local shopping, and local hiring. The positive impact will be felt even before opening day.

We cannot always choose the challenges we face, but we can choose how we face them. In this case, the choice is easy.

Vote "Yes" to save money. Vote "Yes" to prepare our students for life in Vermont or anywhere else. Vote "Yes" to keep them safe. Vote "Yes" to support the local economy.

**Benjamin Brickner,**  
**Pomfret**

### School buildings impact student health and success

Dear Editor,

We are community members who work locally to provide medical care for the entire range of our population from newborn babies to seniors in their 90s and 100s. We feel privileged to work in and for the greater Woodstock community. We'd like to share our perspective on the proposed new middle and high school building and why this project is important to the health and vitality of our community.

A large body of research demonstrates that the condition and design of a school building influences student health and learning as much as any other factor at school. A school building is not just bricks and mortar; it is one of the most crucial ingredients to a student's ability to access their education and a teacher's ability to deliver this education.

The proposed new school project focuses on providing a healthier and safer building for our students and teachers. This is important for all children but especially important for those students with anxiety, depression, asthma, allergies, hearing impairment,

School health → 13

### Key issues to consider before MVSU's new build vote

Dear Editor,

In recent discussions surrounding the upcoming bond vote for our local school district [Mountain Views Supervisory Union], a significant amount of information has been shared. However, some of it may not fully capture the situation's complexity. This letter aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the key issues at hand, focusing on transparency, the size and cost of the proposed building, the implications for local taxes, and relevant legislation.

#### Transparency efforts:

The school district has made a concerted effort to engage the community throughout the planning process. From the strategic plan that involved over 130 community members to where we are today, this has included numerous public meetings led by school board members and community volunteers. There have also been informational sessions across individual towns dating back to 2017, and they are still occurring this very week. Input from our educators has been sought to ensure the proposed building meets educational needs and standards, and advice has been given from local professionals and legislators. In addition, reports from the architect, the many engineers, the construction firm, and our owner's representative are all public documents and are available to be seen by any member of our community. Members of our local media, including the Mountain Times, the Vermont Standard, and the Valley News, are present at the majority of our board meetings and have reported on this several times. And the school district provides updates on the website and through various social media channels

Key issues → 18

## CARTOONS



School Blackout by Kevin Siers, The Charlotte Observer, North Carolina

IF YOU NEED TO KNOW IF THIS  
DEAD CHILD IS ISRAELI OR  
PALESTINIAN BEFORE KNOWING  
HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT IT...



YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG.

Tragic Gaza by Pat Bagley, The Salt Lake Tribune, Utah

## GAZA CHILDREN



Gaza Children by Emad Hajjaj, Alaraby Aljadeed newspaper, London

## COMMENTARY

## It's OK to vote 'No' on school budgets

By Tom Pelham

*This commentary is by Tom Pelham of Berlin, who was finance commissioner in the Dean administration and tax commissioner in the Douglas administration and served on the Appropriations Committee in the Vermont House as an Independent.*

In February 1997, Vermont's Supreme Court found "the current system for funding public education in Vermont, with its substantial dependence on local property taxes and resultant wide disparities in revenues available to local school districts" is in violation of the Vermont Constitution.

In response, in June 1997, the Vermont Legislature and governor enacted the Equal Educational Opportunity Act—Act 60—a Vermont law intended to achieve a fair balance of educational spending across school districts independent of the degree of prosperity within each district. Act 60 was followed by Acts 68 and 130, which addressed some imbalances caused by Act 60.

Acts 68 and 130, established a system to pool the state's educational budgetary requirements from across jurisdictions and pay for them, in part, with pooled statewide property taxes.

Yet, despite these structural changes (or maybe because of them), school budgets for the coming fiscal year are in chaos. VTDigger reports that "State economists, using the latest available school budget projections, have predicted that education spending could increase almost 15% next year. As a result, the latest modeling indicates the average Vermonter could expect education property tax bills to increase 20%."

"School officials say a variety of factors have compounded soaring budgets this year, from disappearing federal dollars, increasing health care costs, school construction needs, teacher salaries, special education costs and more."

It does appear that since the passage of

Sending budgets back to school boards and the Legislature to craft and enact fiscal reforms is the responsible course.

Act 60, that school boards and legislators have allowed themselves to become overwhelmed by the amount of school budgets and the school budget approval process. Consider these underlying facts:

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that Vermont's enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools has dropped by 18,395 students, or 18%, from 102,049 in 2000 to 83,654 in 2022.

Yet, despite the above significant drop in

school enrollments, the actuarial analyses of the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System for fiscal 2000 and 2023 indicate the number of active teachers in Vermont's schools has remained essentially flat at 10,389 in FY 2000 and 10,618 in FY 2023.

Further, the National Education Association Rankings of States profiles Vermont as having the lowest ratio of enrolled students per teacher at 10.2 as compared to the national average of 15.3. Further, the Education Data Initiative profiles Vermont as spending the second highest amount per pupil on K-12 education at \$24,666. The EDI profiles the national average at \$19,380.

Regarding taxpayer burdens, the Legislature's "FY 2000 Fiscal Facts" profiles the Education Fund as providing \$420.2 million

It's hard if not impossible for most everyday Vermonters to understand the budget they are being asked to support.

in revenues toward K-12 education appropriations. For the current fiscal year 2023, the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Office reports that amount has increased to \$1.92 billion.

The passage of Act 60 and its amendments has been embraced by most Vermonters. Equitable access to educational resources across all Vermont communities is both the law and the right public policy.

However, one casualty of these reforms has been the erosion of the long-standing connection enjoyed by Vermonters relative to the passage of local school budgets.

In today's world of "equalized pupils," "income sensitivity," "pupil weights relative to economic and language differences," "5% spending caps" among many other mandates established by the Legislature, it's hard if not impossible for most everyday Vermonters to understand the budget they are being asked to support.

Given the strong influence of special interest advocates, school budgets have been substantially hijacked over the years and are now indecipherable and unaffordable for most Vermonters.

As noted above, Vermonters already spend generously on their public education system. A 20% increase is unreasonable and intolerable. Given the amount Vermonters already spend on K-12 education, sending budgets back to school boards and the Legislature to craft and enact fiscal reforms is the responsible course. It's OK for Vermonters to vote no on school budgets and deliver the message that the current entangled and costly system is not OK.

**LETTERS**

## We can't afford to wait, vote 'Yes' for the school bond

Dear Editor,

My initial response to the proposed Woodstock MS/HS bond and build was, "\$99 million is a lot of money and what is Plan B?" I am a teacher at Mountain Views Supervisory Union. I strongly believe in public education. As an educator, I decided to learn more about this hot topic in our community.

Here is what I found out:

- **Renovation is NOT an option**

Concrete slabs/ cinder blocks makes reno not viable to meet code. The state does not recommend renovating the current building and will not fund it.

- **Current building is NOT safe**

It's not up to code; seismic, fire or ADA compliant. It is unable to quickly and effectively lock-down the facility.

- **Millions have been spent on repairs**

Including failing heat, septic back ups, roof leaks, etc. \$1.3 million was spent on HVAC bandaid in 2022. The state identified approxi-

mately \$16 million in urgent fixes (without solving core issues) if we don't act now.

- **Inflation/cost escalation CAUSED the increase in price**

Over \$20 million increase in cost since 2019 (for a smaller building).

- **Significant cuts**

Can't wait → 15

## Relevant qualifications for municipal jobs questioned

Dear Editor,

Kudos to the KPAA for a well run debate between Select Board candidates Jim Haff and Andrew Gieda. Both candidates met the difficult challenge of standing up and speaking their mind before their fellow citizens, no easy feat, and moderator Mike Coppinger kept them

on track.

I was disappointed when the issue of Mr. Haff's formal education was raised. Not only did this take time away from urgent public issues such as schools and taxes, it felt irrelevant. Mr. Haff's record of business experience

Qualifications → 17

### ← Together: from page 10

I have taught at WUHSMS for 20 years and see these deficiencies every day). A renovation just to meet our most urgent needs would cost upwards of \$16 million and would last only 5-10 years. We would then be having this same discussion again, but the cost would be even greater. The cost of a full renovation is likely \$75 million or more, would take longer to complete, and would be much more disruptive to our current students. Only a new building meets our urgent needs, allows for total redesign for current and future educational needs, meets current codes, meets ADA compliance, reduces energy needs and meets health and safety standards for our students and staff. We can spend \$99 million now or spend more (for less) later. I realize that \$99 million is a huge sum, but it is spread across our seven towns and it is cheaper than what the state recommends per square foot for new construction. Neither delay nor more studies will change the need for a new building. The board has addressed every question posed to them including renovation vs. new build, the urgent need, proper size and design, the tax impact, etc. Read their FAQ's here: [Mtnviews.org/faq-wuhsms-2026](http://Mtnviews.org/faq-wuhsms-2026).

2. We can all work to lower the total cost to local taxpayers by using our seven town and two county advantage to contact all our reps and senators to insist that the state of Vermont restart school infrastructure support at the 30%

level it was at prior to its suspension in 2007. There are ongoing efforts at the statehouse to reinstate this funding. This alone could make the cost much more affordable. We must remember that the state is not considering any money to renovate schools, so should we vote "No" and opt to renovate, this money would not be available to us. In addition, we should urge legislators to make sure that second home owners are fully supporting Vermont infrastructure, including schools. This is only fair, and again, would result in lower taxes for full time residents.

3. We all understand that new students, both resident and tuition students, will bring down the cost to local taxpayers considerably. Understand that private schools and the Vermont academies (Burr & Burton, St. Johnsbury Academy, etc.) spend a lot to advertise their schools. WUHSMS is one of the best performing schools in the state, third best in the state according to U.S. News and World Report rankings. Using this information, along with a new state-of-the-art facility, we could empower the Woodstock Economic Development Commission to engage in a robust advertising effort to promote "tuition" towns, as well as to families and students regionally. We could expand our effort to attract international students through the partnerships with international schools established by our excellent language department

teachers, as well as through agencies who facilitate these exchanges.

4. Educate our neighbors on fixed incomes regarding property tax abatement/rebate/prebates. Some may not be aware about how this can impact them and significantly lower their taxes. This can limit the impact for those least able to pay.

5. Empower local support agencies (the Hub, Barnard Helping Hands, etc.) to fundraise specifically to help those in need of property tax assistance. Donate to these agencies specifically for this purpose if you can.

6. Continue with fundraising specifically to reduce the overall cost of the bond. Remember that the Union Arena was built with private funds and there are donors in the area who may be willing to make very significant contributions once they see that the community is on board with a new school. Encourage smaller donations as well, to be applied directly to reduce the overall cost of the project.

Lastly, I believe it is our responsibility and that now is our time to invest in our future as a community, and to invest in the thousands of students who will walk through the doors of WUHS over the next 75 years. We need to vote yes with a sense of optimism and then work together to make sure no one in our community is burdened beyond their abilities.

Thank you all.  
**Stephen Stuntz,**  
*Woodstock*

### ← School health: from page 11

ADHD, learning disabilities and for those with physical disabilities. We outline below how the new building will provide a healthier learning environment:

1) Safety—The new design includes a floor plan with pods, angles, and the ability to shut off sections from each other. This helps to protect children and faculty in the event of an intruder and from other hazardous events. The new design meets today's safety standards, the current facility cannot be renovated to meet these standards.

2) Noise reduction—the current building's outdated building materials, mechanical systems, and retrofitted systems create a very high level of ambient noise. These noise levels make it difficult for communication, comprehension, concentration, and memorization and reduce students' ability to learn.

3) Daylight—The current building lacks adequate daylight, which impairs vision, mental health and concentration. Students who are exposed to more daylight in school have improved mood, less fatigue, less eye strain, fewer headaches, and improved sleep. Schools today are therefore designed with many windows. The orientation of the new building is designed to capture the arch of the sun and provide southern exposure to increase daylight. To cut costs of the new school, the building committee has already removed 25% of the windows originally proposed.

4) Thermal regulation—

The current HVAC system and retrofits cause huge fluctuations and variability in temperatures throughout the building. Temperature fluctuations are linked to decreased focus for teachers and decreased student achievement and processing speed, lower test scores and poorer overall cognition. Even with improvements, our current school's building envelope does not allow for

Children deserve to spend their six years of middle and high school (one third of their childhood years) in a facility that meets current health, safety, educational, and accessibility standards.

reliable thermal regulation. The new building will provide a controlled thermal environment and improve students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach.

5) Ventilation—The current building has a lack of adequate ventilation. This causes increased levels of common indoor pollutants which causes increased symptoms of asthma, allergies, headaches, nausea, and increased viral transmission rates. Poor ventilation in schools causes an increase in absenteeism in teachers and students. The new school will help to reduce these common health concerns.

6) ADA accessibility - The current building is not up to code and does not meet today's accessibility requirements, making it inadequate for students, faculty, and visitors with disabilities. The

new building will be accessible to all.

It is clear based on a large body of medical literature that up to date school facilities lead to improved mental health, physical health, and increased productivity for children and faculty. Furthermore, the new school building will help to support and retain the families who live and work here, including those who work in fields that

provide care for our community.

The Mountain View School District's children deserve to spend their six years of middle and high school (one third of their childhood years) in a facility that meets current health, safety, educational,

and accessibility standards.

We are impressed with the diligence of the school board and community members who have worked tirelessly over the past seven years, thoroughly evaluating many different options, including renovating the current facility, to make sure that taxpayers are presented with the best possible solution to our middle and high school's failing infrastructure. The proposed new school building offers the most effective and cost efficient solution to meet today's school health, safety, and educational standards.

Please join us in voting "Yes" to the new school building, and supporting our children and community!

**Dr. Lorissa Segal, Barnard;**  
**Dr. Clare Drebitko,**  
*Woodstock;*  
**Dr. Alan Frascoia,**  
*Woodstock*

# Andrew Gieda

## For Killington Selectman

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



IT'S TIME  
FOR A  
**CHANGE**

- Checks: Balances
- Hear the voice of the second homeowners
- Enforce ethics
- Lower taxes
- Transparency

**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.

## LETTERS

## Gieda for Select Board, I humbly ask for your vote

Dear Editor,

I wanted to thank the community for giving me the platform to address the current issues in Killington. I am running for a seat on the Killington Select Board against Jim Haff, but I believe that it's the system we are fighting against the most. We are constantly battling higher taxes, more local spending, and a set of rules that have been put in place by the establishment that are just not working for us anymore.

For those who watched our debate last Wednesday, I wanted to thank you and I hope you got to know more about me and where I stand. I also want to thank Jim Haff for all the years of volunteering and the time he has put into the community.

Although we are running against each other, we both care about this community. That being said, I do think now is the time for a change.

It just seems like the current bureaucracy is getting out of hand. We are spending

money we don't have. We continue to add positions not only in the fire department but also in our town office. I understand hiring for growth is necessary, but hiring for projected growth five years down the road just doesn't make sense. Hire as needed. As a small business owner I have to watch my bottom line. We need to treat our local tax dollars in the same way.

There are twice as many people working at the town office now then there were a few years ago. There are certain costs imposed on us that are just not in our control — education taxes, property taxes and healthcare. But what we do control is our local budget and how many paid positions there are in this town. How many more full-time firefighters do we need? We have a long list of volunteers that would like to come back and fight for this town but our current board is just putting their heads in the sand when it comes to this.

I've also heard that Jim Haff is setting himself up to oversee TIF as a hired "consultant" by the town, leaving himself a backdoor to still stay in control if he loses this election. I am not the ethics police, but I do believe someone who is a Select Board member has to understand people will start to question his motives. Not only does Jim's wife control the finances in this town, he is also the zoning administrator, health officer, and now is talking about overseeing TIF. He is also working side-by-side with the developers who are about to spend millions of dollars here. I am questioning where the line is when it comes to serving the interest of *this* community first?

In my opinion TIF should be overseen by the Select Board, and if that task becomes too burdensome for the board to handle, I suggest forming a committee of other volunteers rather than hiring

Gieda → 17

## ← Personal property tax:

from page 9

towns until the late 1980s, when voters in each town were allowed to choose whether or not their town would impose the tax.

Area towns that chose to continue to adopt the personal property tax include Bridgewater, Killington, Pittsford, Reading, Rutland City and Rutland Town. Hartland and Woodstock do not employ the tax. The participating towns collect the business personal property tax, and keep the revenues.

Gieda feels inequity results from selective self-reporting and lax collection efforts, and individual towns not participating tempt businesses to register their business nearby, instead of in Killington, even if they park their equipment in town.

Larger cities, such as Burlington, derive significant revenue from the business personal property tax.

Killington's business personal property tax revenues are not to be sneezed at — Gieda told the Mountain Times 80 businesses do report and pay their business personal property taxes. AT&T, for example, paid \$617,000, he said. He has been paying the tax on his equipment since 2007.

There are two categories of assets subject to the business personal property tax: machinery and equipment, and inventory. Of the listed participating towns, only Rutland Town taxes inventory, which is exempted in the other towns.

As Gieda pointed out, the tax is calculated by the taxpayer using state-designed forms for registering as an eligible business, evaluating depreciated taxable value, and listing assets with the calculated tax. The reported business property value is taxed at the current municipal rate. By April 20 this year, businesses must have filed their FY2025 tax forms.

Burlington's website introduction to the tax process recognizes information provided by the taxpayer is "proprietary," and guarantees the public won't have access to it.

It's complicated. The taxable value formula described in the Burlington intro is really difficult to parse. The Killington listers' page on the town website doesn't even mention business personal tax, although it is the listers who are responsible for mailing the forms to all businesses early in the year. The assets are taxed at their depreciated assessed value.

Gieda asked why the Select Board isn't acting to enforce collection of the business personal property tax, claiming the town was losing between \$30,000 and \$100,000 revenue by not doing so.

Selectman Jim Haff, against whom Gieda is running for the Select Board seat, said tax collection isn't a responsibility of the Select Board, and that talking to the town treasurer, town manager and listers would make more sense.

## ← Can't wait:

from page 13

## WERE made to the original design

MVSU has already cut 6,000 square feet and \$16 million in cost already. The current plan for the building is the right size — additional cuts would result in inadequate learning/teaching spaces AND would not significantly reduce tax impact.

- **Price per square feet is UNDER comparisons**

We are at \$627 per square foot. Acceptable square feet costs for building new high schools per VT-AOE is \$645 square feet. Burlington high school is at \$837 per square foot.

- **More efficient and cost-effective**

New building material, efficient design plus zero energy elements equals substantially lower operating costs (and better for the environment).

- **Short-term tax increase? Or waiting and spending even more?**

Waiting even a year could increase taxes an additional 5% or more.

- **Biggest bang for our buck**

Waterbury's Harwood middle school renovation is now estimated at \$92 million, up from \$60 million in 2021.

- **There's no plan B**

We can't afford to wait! As a teacher at Woodstock Elementary, I know quite well how our current MS/HS looks from the outside and how our students and staff feel about it. It is depressing, people don't drink the water. The heat fails. The septic backs up. The air quality is awful. The ceiling actually falls in. Some classrooms are even closed off because of damage. I knew that it was old, but the more I found out about the actual bones of the facility, the more I was convinced that we need to build new now.

Not to mention how long our Board and other com-

We chose Woodstock because of the schools, because of this community. Because it is worth it. It is worth voting "Yes" for our community.

munity members have been working on this project. I attended meetings about this problem back in 2017. Years of research, resources and energy has been put into determining the MOST economical and efficient solution. We are lucky to have such a dedicated team working tirelessly behind the scenes to guarantee us tax-payers get the biggest bang for our buck.

And now, I want to share my deepest concern, because I have seen it play out first-hand. In 2019, The Prosper Valley School closed because of mold. For three school years, the building sat vacant while remediation was done. During that time, TPVS students and staff had to share space with us at WES;

combining teachers and grades on the third floor — a school within a school. After that first year, our classes got bigger. We added universal Pre-K. If that were to happen now, WES would not be able to absorb them. Every space is maxed out.

It is very possible that a major emergency repair is now on its way for our middle school/high school. Just read the Facility Conditions Assessment on the district website. VT-AOE rated us the second worst facility in the state. Our FCI rating is almost 90% (out of a 100%). This stands for the percentage of building systems that have failed, or are at-risk of failure. A rating of 30% + indicates "end of useful life."

The state of Vermont

will not provide funding to renovate a facility that has a FCI of 65% or higher.

So, where will our kids go if and when the current building fails? Bus them to Hartford? Windsor? Rutland? Send millions of dollars over to another school district? Or, set up trailers? Those who can afford it, perhaps they send their children to boarding school? Maybe families decide to sell their homes while the market is high? Making room for second-homeowners, who don't rely on a school system or a community?

It is the people who choose to live in our towns full-time that make our community. It is the people who choose to work, participate, build relationships, retire, raise families and grandkids, own local businesses, live in our community for generations, and it's the people who choose to send their kids to our community

public school that makes this our community.

No school equals no community.

I am a teacher in our community, my husband is a firefighter in our community; our three kids attend WCCC [Woodstock Christian Child Care] and Woodstock Elementary. We chose to build roots in Woodstock, Vermont. We chose Woodstock because of the schools, because of this community. Because it is worth it. It is worth voting "Yes" for our community.

There has been much conversation about what members of our community can and cannot afford. As a teacher, parent and taxpayer in this community, I cannot afford to wait.

Education is key for making an informed decision on Article 7. I am voting "Yes" on March 5th, to save our community from unnecessary costs.

**Kristen Hubbell,**  
Woodstock

LETTERS

Caring about our future

Dear Editor,

Why do so many school 'new build' supporters voice a message that suggests that voting for the current plan on the ballot equals caring about, and supporting children's future, while not supporting this specific plan is not? Every non-supporter of the building bond that I know simply feels that this specific build is more expensive than this small, shrinking area can afford, not that we should do nothing to invest in the area's and children's futures.

There are legitimate concerns about the affordability of this plan. Despite anecdotes about strollers and a 'baby boom,' actual projections of our area show decline not growth (Vermont Joint Fiscal Office, Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont Dept of Health, U.S. Census, U.S. Dept. of Education, etc.). In the dismal economic state Vermont's education fund is in, school construction aid should not be counted

on to return. There is simply no money, no lobbying can change that.

Furthermore, fund-raising has been weak.

It is unfair of people to say they support the build because they care, as if others don't.

Between 2019 and today, the school district re-announced the "fundraising kickoff" a few times, maybe because so little had been raised. \$3.5 million committed in five years does not give one confidence that this will ever be a major contribution. To me, this all shows that the first step in this project should have been to determine a budget based on what the tax base can reasonably raise — a true public project. The private aspect of this public project was a choice of the board, not the public, and it helps create the hope/belief in some other

form of funding but not needing to count on it.

I would like to see the discourse on this issue be about actual data and fair-minded sentiments.

It is unfair of people to say they support the build because they care, as if others don't. And what about caring about the income inequality furthered by tax im-

pacts, and about those that will have to move as a result? Homestead tax credit is not nearly enough to save many people's fates. I have to believe that supporters must not believe that such a tax increase will have a devastating impact on some individuals and perhaps the area. But with so much at stake, I would hope for consideration of an alternative path for a different construction plan after a "No" vote. Let's build or rebuild a public building based on what we — the public — can afford.

*Pamela Fraser, Barnard*

← Harrison: from page 9

in the FY25 budget due to lower tax receipts. The amended bill puts off the decisions on how to replace the revenue or reduce expenses until next year.

- Legislation introduced with a lot of fanfare by House leadership to expand Medicaid to more Vermonters, H.721, may be pared back to be a study on cost estimates for various components of the bill. There is a growing awareness among various committees that any new spending will require new taxes.
- The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced to the full Senate, S.209, which prohibits unserialized firearms (ghost guns).
- The Senate Health & Welfare

Committee is taking up legislation, S.187, which would allow students to have and apply sunscreen at school with the permission of a parent or guardian. Evidently under current FDA regulations, a doctor's note may be required to students to use sunscreen at school.

I plan to visit each of the town meeting sessions on Monday evening, March 4, as well as the town meeting in Pittsfield on March 9. Hope to see many of you there. Please be sure to vote on Town Meeting Day, March 5, at town offices for Chittenden (10-7), Killington (7-7) and Mendon (8-7).

*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.*

← Three reasons: from page 10

in newer-built schools and also the challenge of having to get creative teaching in schools that were unable to structurally keep up with 21st Century education demands. What I learned in that time is that educators are fantastic no matter the shell we put them in (case in point: MVSU is ranked in the Top 3 high schools in Vermont academically, but second to worst structurally), but I also learned that if the building supports the best and most up to date education practices and creates an environment of feeling safe and enhancing student and educator well-being, students and teachers will have so much more opportunity to shine. Educators and students in our district shouldn't be concerned about whether the heat in their classroom will work on any given day or whether the plumbing will hold up. These are unnecessary distractions to the already demanding jobs of being an educator and being a teenage student. Our educators and students deserve better.

Third, the communities in our school district support students. I grew up in

Woodstock, went to Woodstock Elementary School and then on to the middle/high school, graduating in 2006. I have memories of community members volunteering during ski Fridays in elementary school; memories of the many,

up our district. As a unified school district, we were fortunate as students to have support from not just our "hometown" but from all seven of our communities at those car washes and games and performances and for every step of the way.

This type of community, plain and simple, is why I returned to this area in 2018 to plant my own roots. I want today and tomorrow's children to have that same steadfast belief that their broader community values them and believes in their future. Voting yes for this new school build is one very clear way to send that message!

many community members letting us middle and high schoolers wash their cars in exchange for a donation for our sports teams; memories of business owners across the district opening their offices to us to let us learn about what it would be like to have different careers during career days. I could go on, but my point is that my positive experiences in the MVSU school system all trace back to all of the wider communities that make

This type of community, plain and simple, is why I returned to this area in 2018 to plant my own roots. I want today and tomorrow's children to have that same steadfast belief that their broader community values them and believes in their future. Voting yes for this new school build is one very clear way to send that message!

Vote "Yes" on Article 7 on March 5.

*Logan (Seely) Paluch, Killington*

← Vote: from page 10

informational meeting, look over your town and school reports, and ask who is running for those open seats. If you are a parent, consider bringing your children when you vote, so they can learn that voting is an essential part of being part of a democracy and that it is important to you.

Your town or city clerk is a valuable resource, as well as the My Voter Page, a service of the Vermont Secretary of State's Office. If there is any place in America where people can come together across divides to solve problems, it is Vermont. And this gives me hope.

← School for all: from page 10

Even in my brief time here, I've learned that loyalty to one's own constituents on municipal boards is fierce, as it should be. Every school board member would have voted what best served their specific neighbors — seniors and kids alike — not as part of any overarching agenda for the district. That means that 15 out of 16 present school board members from towns in our district — Killington, Bridgewater, Barnard, Reading, Plymouth, Woodstock and Pomfret —

voted in support of this new school for different reasons, all in accordance with their own town's needs. When I was considering whether to vote for this new school, I couldn't help but

late into the night. Every board member did enough due diligence to answer for their vote, knowing the future of their beloved community rested on their choice.

That is exceptional and

Every school board member would have voted what best served their specific neighbors ...

imagine the room full of people from every corner of our district debating this issue since 2016 over coffee

a big part of why I'm voting YES for our new school. *Elizabeth Wellington, South Pomfret*

Perfect for holiday gifts & meals!

**vermont Farmers Food Center** **ONLINE FARMERS MARKET**  
Produce, dairy, bakery, meat, maple, and specialty items

**Fresh, nutritious, local, and convenient**  
Shop from local farms online for curbside pick up at 251 West St. in Rutland or at the Killington Welcome Center

[vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/onlinemarket](http://vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/onlinemarket)





**H.850:** .....  
from page 8

day. I feel the same way about my 2017 proposal to rein in rising healthcare costs for school employees and reinvest savings in kids and property tax relief. Or my 2018 five-year plan that would have enacted my 2017 healthcare proposal, phased in a modest increase in the staff-to-student ratio through attrition, addressed unfairness in our income sensitivity formula and added guardrails for towns that can afford to overspend at the expense of those who cannot. Or my recent calls to ensure local voters know the annual per pupil increase they're voting on and to extend our universal vote by mail process to school budget votes.

"All these ideas have been ignored or rejected. But any one of them would have put us on a better path to a sustainable public education system.

"While I appreciate your commitment in this bill, affirming it is 'the intent of the General Assembly to address the delivery, governance and financing of Vermont's education system,' this bill does not fix it. To be clear, I remain ready to work with you to both improve student outcomes and contain costs to a level Vermonters can afford," the governor concluded.

**Gieda:** .....  
from page 15

yet another position or advisor. The point of me bringing this to your attention is because we need clearer rules and to enforce stronger ethics. I dedicated a lot of time to this at the debate.

Per a report from the Vermont State Ethics Commission on Jan. 15, 2024: "Vermont currently lacks a comprehensive state-wide municipal ethics framework," which includes but is not limited to conflict of interest, lack of disclosure, retaliation, lack of enforcement of existing rules, nepotism and bullying.

This current Select Board abuses the executive sessions at public meetings. These meetings should be public first and foremost. If this continues as stated in this Ethics Commission Report, residents will stop attending municipal meetings, and feel unwelcome. This is not the town we want for the future.

Either way, agree with me or not, I am encouraging everyone to come out and vote. What I most appreciate about this process is that we have the opportunity to speak our minds, disagree on issues, and not be retaliated against. Jim Haff has been a formidable opponent and I have enjoyed our open discussions about the issues. I want to wish him good luck. I also want to thank all of you and I am asking for your vote.

*Andrew Gieda, Killington*

**Qualifications:** .....  
from page 13


as well as his service on school and Select Boards, all while filling various town jobs on a seemingly as-needed basis is evidence enough that a college degree is unnecessary in order to serve your community with competence and integrity.

It does raise an important point, although perhaps not the one Mr. Gieda intended. Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Utah, Maryland, New Jersey, Colorado, North Carolina, Alaska and Virginia have rolled back college degree requirements for many government jobs in their states. In the private

sector, GM, Google, Delta, Bank of America, IBM, and Tesla have done the same. In doing so, they offer opportunities to those who choose not (or could not afford) to pursue a college education.

It's time for the state of Vermont to do the same and open up quality, middle-class, publicly funded jobs to all of its citizens. To exclude anyone like Mr. Haff from community service on the basis of educational credentials is a foolish waste of resources, one our town cannot afford.

Sincerely,  
*Steven Kent, Killington*



**TOWN OF  
KILLINGTON  
VERMONT**

**PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC  
HEARING NOTICE**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO KILLINGTON ZONING BYLAWS  
and KILLINGTON ZONING MAP**

The Killington Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed Town of Killington Zoning Bylaw Amendments on **March 20, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.** at the Public Safety Building, 800 Killington Road, Killington, Vermont. The hearing will also be held remotely via zoom. The link to join remotely is: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89935436769> or by call in: +16468769923,89935436769#. This public notice is given pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 4444.


**The principal purpose of the proposed zoning bylaw amendments is to:**

- (1) reflect changes to the Vermont Planning and Development Act (the "Act") that were enacted by the Vermont Legislature in July 2023, which establish new required provisions in every municipal zoning bylaw
- (2) modify the manner in which building heights are measured
- (3) modify building height limitations to reflect the new manner in which building heights are measured
- (4) modify building height limitations applicable to PUDs in the Ski Village II District
- (5) modify setbacks applicable to PUDs in the Ski Village District and in the Ski Village II District
- (6) authorize the Town to assess an application fee to pay or to reimburse the Town for the cost of hiring or engaging engineers, professional consultants, or attorneys to assist the Town with its review of applications
- (7) make revisions throughout the zoning bylaw to clarify and correct definitions, paragraph numberings, and other provisions for the purposes of internal consistency and conformance with the Act. These amendments will affect every geographical area of Killington. The Town of Killington Zoning Map has also been amended to relocate the boundary between the Ski Village District and the Ski Village II District.

The proposed zoning bylaw amendments affect every section of the zoning bylaw, however, the section headings materially affected by the proposed zoning bylaw amendments are SECTION 120 - DEFINITIONS, SECTION 240 - USES, DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS, DENSITY AND DISTRICTS, SECTION 426 - HEIGHT REGULATIONS, and SECTION 610 - ZONING PERMITS.

The full text of the proposed Town of Killington Zoning Bylaw Amendments may be found at the Town Clerk's office, 2706 River Road, Killington and on the Planning Commission page of the Town's website at <https://KillingtonTown.com>.

*Dated at Killington, Vermont this 22st day of March 2024.  
Lisa Davis Lewis, Town Planner, Town of Killington, Vermont*



**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.

**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](http://www.killingtontown.com)

*DATE POSTED: February 21, 2024*

## Build new:

from page 11

Ben Ford, vice-chair of the Mountain Views Supervisory Union (MVSU) board, and others on this post to ensure it is as accurate as possible.

### Woodstock Union's 96.7 FCI rating, what it means

One of the things tossed around a lot is the 96.7% Facility Condition Index (FCI) rating our school received from the state in 2022. What does that rating mean?

The FCI is a metric the state developed to measure the "depletion" level of school facilities. It is a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 is the least depleted and 100 is the most depleted. Our high school building was found to have a 96.7% FCI. To the state, our school is on its last legs.

Read the MVSU FCI report here: [Tinyurl.com/WoodstockFCI](https://tinyurl.com/WoodstockFCI).

Why is this important for you to know? You've probably heard that the legislature is looking to restart school construction aid after a 16-year hiatus?

There's a catch for us, however. While the state is very likely to reinstate funding for school construction and renovation, on Feb. 1, the School Construction Aid Task Force announced new standards indicating that buildings with an FCI of 65% or above will not be eligible for aid. In other words, Woodstock will not be eligible for renewed state construction funding IF we opt for the renovation route.

It doesn't matter whether you or I think renovation is the way to go. What matters is the 96.7% FCI disqualifies us from state aid. It's hard to argue with this policy taken by the state. In fairness, it offers three key benefits to all state residents, including us:

#### 1. Cost effectiveness

Vermont's policy of not funding renovations for buildings with FCIs of above 65% is simple: Such facilities are more expensive in the long run. The higher the FCI rating, the more extensive and costly the renovation would be. By setting a threshold, the state wants to ensure that its funds

are invested in projects that offer a reasonable balance between the cost of renovation and the expected benefits, such as extended building usability and safety improvements.

#### 2. More efficient use of resources

By prioritizing buildings that are in a better state of repair (i.e., those with a FCI of 65% or below), the state can maximize the impact of its investments, ensuring that a larger number of students benefit from safer and more functional facilities. This approach prevents the allocation of excessive funds to projects that may not be justifiable in terms of cost versus benefit.

#### 3. Better long-term planning

The policy encourages long-term planning and maintenance. Knowing that buildings with a very high FCI will not qualify for state funding, school districts might be incentivized to maintain their facilities regularly to avoid reaching such a critical level of disrepair. Prevention and timely maintenance reduce the need for extensive and costly renovations.

#### Renovation vs. new build impact on taxpayers

How much will it cost to renovate the building and how will it affect you, the taxpayer? In 2023, state inspectors conducted a visual walkthrough of the school and quoted a minimum of \$16 million. Was the board surprised by that high number from just a mere walkthrough? Not at all!

Back in 2017, the MVSU board engaged an architect and a multi-disciplinary team of consultants to conduct a comprehensive review of the school's conditions and to approximate how much it would cost to do an effective renovation. The estimated cost all those years ago was \$51 million. With inflation, that price would be closer to \$75 million in 2024 dollars.

Remember, our FCI of

96.7% means we won't qualify for state aid. If we wanted to renovate, we'd need to fund the full cost by a bond.

At the Feb. 20 Select Board meeting, Jon Spector, EDC chair, pointed out yet another painful wrinkle: by law, a state bond to fund school renovations have a maximum term of 30 years or the expected life of the building, whichever is less. That means we don't have the option of spreading out repayment of the bond over a 40-year period as we can for a new build.

#### Attrition will have a scary impact on our taxes

There's another challenge to renovation that Ben Ford demonstrated at the Feb. 20 Select Board meeting: attrition.

A renovation will be messy and noisy, and the disruption will go on for years. No parent wants to subject their children to those conditions, and many will opt to send their kids elsewhere. It's not unreasonable to assume that we will lose 10 kids each year over the 10-year period it will likely take to complete the renovation.

Let's make some assumptions. Let's say that the cost of renovation is \$16 million (an unrealistic number, but we're making a point here). Let's further assume that we lose 10 kids per year for a decade. How will that affect our taxes?

We will lose \$2 million a year from the state for our declining number of students. In year one we'll lose \$2 million, in year two it will be \$4 million, and so on. By year 10 of a 30-year bond for a \$16 million renovation we'll pay higher taxes than building a new school with flat enrollment!

Yes, you read that correctly. A \$16 million renovation project that drags on for years and prompts kids to go elsewhere will lead to us paying higher taxes than if we were to build a new school — even if we don't grow enrollment. Pop those numbers into the calculator on the new school website to see for yourself.

You can access it here: [Mtnviews.org/breaking-new-ground](https://mtnviews.org/breaking-new-ground) (page down to the "download the tax calculator"

button). And then remember that the true cost of renovation will be around \$75 million. Combine that with the loss of state aid and you'll see it's unaffordable.

#### Let's be the "hub"

Okay, but would we qualify for new construction state aid, you ask? On Dec. 20, 2023, the State Board of Education established new square-foot standards for the School Construction Aid Program. Those standards require construction costs no higher than \$654 per square foot. Ours is \$627.

Another factor in our favor: The School Construction Aid Task Force has signaled a preference for building new schools (as opposed to renovation) and further consolidation. This is a framework known as "Newer and Fewer."

High schools are expensive to build, so the fewer the better as far as the state is concerned. In the quest for consolidation, new and safe schools will serve as "hubs" to surrounding towns.

This policy could really benefit Woodstock as our consolidated school meets the requirements for being a "hub." And in fact, on Feb. 16, the state approved Woodstock as a "hub." This answers the question: If we build it, will they come? Yes, because we're the "hub."

And when they come they will lower our taxes.

#### The bottom line

Given our 96.7% FCI and the limits it imposes, a new school is inevitable. A renovation is an expensive, short-term fix that won't negate the need for a new school.

And the fact that our square-foot cost is below the state's recommendation is proof positive that the school board has created a school design at the lowest possible cost. The idea that we can build a school for half the price is wishful thinking. Understandable, but wishful.

It really comes down to this: We can pay \$99 million for a school in 2024, or we can pay significantly more by kicking the project down the road.

*Susie Stulz,  
Woodstock Village*

## Key issues:

from page 11

to keep the public informed and involved.

#### Building size and cost considerations:

The proposed design for the new school has the same number of classrooms as the existing building does today, but includes adjustments to better serve current and future educational needs. These adjustments involve expanding certain areas, such as the lunchroom and spaces for middle school sports (so parents can watch their children), to align with modern educational practices, ADA compliance, and new special education standards.

fees on new construction to help lessen the burden on our taxes. In the meantime, the state may pass legislation to our benefit.

#### Legislation and funding:

Upcoming state legislation could impact school funding, particularly with regard to the construction of new buildings versus renovation projects. The state is considering a "fewer and newer" approach and has already let us know that our building, even under new legislation, would NOT be recommended for any state funding IF we proceed with renovations. Recently, the new building being proposed, however,

on Feb. 16, the state approved Woodstock as a "hub." This answers the question: If we build it, will they come? Yes, because we're the "hub."

Based on 80% occupancy, because not every classroom is used 100% of the time, this proposal accommodates a capacity that matches the district's current enrollment and gives us a bit of room for growth, should it occur. Knowing that the size is correct and knowing that the building comes in at a cost of \$569 per square foot, which is below the state threshold and cheaper than five other school projects in Vermont that are priced between \$633 and \$726 per square foot. The school board firmly believes that this proposal continues to offer a strong education for our students and provides the best value to the taxpayers.

#### Tax implications:

The district's financial planning has been robust, with a five-year capital improvement plan in place that anticipates various scenarios. We have planned to time the bond repayment to begin after the building's completion, which provides time to fundraise, find grants, increase enrollment, and consider things like impact

did receive preliminary approval from the state, meaning the new build WOULD be eligible for state funding when a program comes back online.

Currently, the recommendation is for 30%-40% of construction costs to be paid for at the state level. It's important to note that the board did not build this into any assumptions, and still feels the current proposal is the most cost-effective solution without these funds, but receiving them would further reduce any impact to the taxpayers.

In summary, the discussion around the school district's plans involves a range of factors, including efforts to ensure transparency, considerations for the size and cost of the new building, the impact on local taxes, and the potential effects of state legislation.

It's important for the community to engage with these issues thoughtfully, drawing on accurate and comprehensive information to for your decisions when you vote on March 5.

*Bryce Sammel,  
Bernard MVSU district  
board member*

### WORDPLAY

MANAGE TIME WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and backwards

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

AGENDA  
 APPOINTMENT  
 ASSISTANCE  
 BALANCE  
 CLEANING

CONTACTS  
 CONTEXT  
 DEADLINES  
 DELEGATE  
 FILES

FLAG  
 GOALS  
 IMPORTANCE  
 INTEGRATION  
 MANAGEMENT

MEETING  
 ORGANIZE  
 PLANNER  
 PRIORITY  
 REMINDER

SCHEDULE  
 TASKS  
 TIMER  
 VALUES

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### SUDOKU

Solutions → 33

### 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 → 33

**CLUES ACROSS**

- Home of Iowa State University
- \_\_\_-fi (slang)
- Mottled green and yellow fruit
- Capable of thinking and expressing oneself clearly
- Sports broadcaster Eagle
- Midday
- Kinsmen
- Cable network
- Simpleton
- Brunch beverage
- Fed
- European capital
- Native inhabitants
- Mechanical device
- Rare geese native to Hawaii
- Bedroom furnishing
- The products of human creativity
- Mass transit option
- Made a mistake
- Sacred sound symbol
- Large N. American reindeer
- Dull and flat
- Partner to huffing

**CLUES DOWN**

- Written works
- Monetary unit of Serbia
- Midway between east and southeast
- Peninsula of southwestern Asia
- Widely used multiuser OS
- Aggressive dog
- Varnished
- Hindu queen
- Time units, abbr.
- Farm animals
- Capital of Latvia
- Where golfers begin
- Takes to civil court
- One who graduated
- An inspired holy person
- Electronic counter-counter-measures
- A place to store things
- Indian instrument
- Spanish saloon
- Whole number
- Not fastened
- Gives a boost
- Lounges about
- Interested in
- Remove salt

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				

- Type of sword
- Naturally occurring solid material
- Gets involved without being invited
- Feline
- Bobby \_\_\_, NHL champ
- "Kill Bill" actress Thurman
- Hawaiian dish
- Moroccan coastal region
- Baseball statistic
- Long period of time
- Moved earth
- Central Netherlands city
- Take stock of
- Central processing unit
- Distinctive qualities one generates
- Getting stuck
- Loss of bodily movements
- Veranda
- Abrupt
- What cats do
- Expresses pleasure
- Type of cheese
- Professional STEM organization
- Automatic data processing systems

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

Level: Intermediate

### Guess Who?

I am a professional born in Arkansas on February 27, 1980. I come from a famous family of politicians, and at one point I lived in the White House. I hold Master's degrees from prominent schools and a Ph.D. from Oxford.

Answer: Chelsea Clinton

**WEDNESDAY**

2/28

**Public Skating**

Wednesdays, Jan.-Feb. Union Arena, 80 Amsden Way, Woodstock. Ages 13+ \$6; ages 4-12 \$5; ages 3 and under, free. 2-3 p.m. Seniors, parents with toddlers. 3-4:10 p.m. All ages. Rental skates available, \$6/pair. [unionarena.org/public-skate-sessions/](http://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/](http://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](http://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](http://normanwilliams.org), 802-457-2295

**Adult Open Gym: Coed Pickleball**

7-9 p.m. Final day 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](mailto:recadmin@killingtontown.com)

**Fundamentals of Wheel-Throwing**

6-8 p.m. Wednesdays to April 3. ArtisTree Community Arts Center, 2095 Pomfret Road, South Pomfret. \$225. Wedging, centering, and throwing clay and the basics of trimming, plus an overview of glazes and firing. The fee includes all stoneware clay, glazes, and firing. Participants will need to return to pick up their finished work. [artistreevt.org](http://artistreevt.org).

**THURSDAY**

2/29

**Killington Bone Builders**

10 a.m. Weekly. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. Weights are provided. [sherburnelibrary.org](http://sherburnelibrary.org) or 802-422-4323.

**Domestic/Sexual Violence Support Group**

10:30-11:30 a.m. Weekly. Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. Free. Partnering with New Story Center. A different theme each month, flyers available at the Godnick Center or call 802-775-3232. [rutlandrec.com/godnick](http://rutlandrec.com/godnick) or 802-773-1853

**Art at the Chaffee: Artery**

10:30 a.m.-noon. Weekly. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$10 if you bring your own painting supplies, up to \$20 if supplies provided. Painting in all mediums welcome. No set topic or instructor, attendees will work on their individual artwork. Must preregister. [chaffeeartcenter.square.site/](http://chaffeeartcenter.square.site/) or 802-775-0356

**Community Lunch**

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Mondays, Thursdays. Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. Over 60, \$3.50; under 59, \$6. Donations welcome. In partnership with Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging and Meals on Wheels, the Godnick Center hosts congregate meals. If interested, call 773-1853 and leave a message with your name and phone number, the Monday or the Thursday before. [rutlandrec.com/godnick](http://rutlandrec.com/godnick)

**Ukulele Group**

Noon-1 p.m. Weekly. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. Free. Ages 12+. Pre-register by the Wednesday before at 802-775-0356 or at [chaffeeartcenter.square.site](http://chaffeeartcenter.square.site)

**Art at the Chaffee: Final****Seminar with Robert**

Noon-1 p.m. Lunch 'n' Learn discussion: "LEAP DAY: One Giant Leap for Humanity." Does anybody really know what TIME it is? We will explore what the future may bring with new awareness of Psyche and Physics to bring new perspectives of Life forming in us, by the technology of AI. May be paired with Art Lab. 1-2 p.m.: Art Lab: "LEAP DAY: One Giant Leap for Humanity." Mind-blowing images of the James Webb Space Telescope. [chaffeeartcenter.square.site/](http://chaffeeartcenter.square.site/) or 802-775-0356

**Michelob Ultra Race World**

1-3 p.m. Final day 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](http://tfaforms.com/5031843). [picomountain.com](http://picomountain.com)

**Play Bridge!**

2 p.m. Weekly. Norman Williams Public Library, 10 The Green, Woodstock. Free. Beginners are welcome to observe. [normanwilliams.org](http://normanwilliams.org), 802-457-2295

**Ballroom Dance**

Open house night. Waldron Gym, 1 Brennan Circle, Poultney. Free class to new students in Waltz and ChaCha. Weekly classes include Tango & ChaCha for kids, Foxtrot and Salsa for adults. For class times and cost, contact Patti Panebianco at 516-909-1686 or email her at [pattidance@gmail.com](mailto:pattidance@gmail.com). Offered by Stone Valley Arts Center, Poultney.

**Open Mic Night**

7-9 p.m. Alternate Thursdays. ArtisTree, 2095 Pomfret Road, South Pomfret. Free. [artistreevt.org/artistree-events](http://artistreevt.org/artistree-events) or 802-457-3500

**Adult Open Gym: Basketball**

7-9 p.m. Final day March 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](mailto:recadmin@killingtontown.com)

**FRIDAY**

3/1

**Story Time at the Library**

10:30-11:30 a.m. Weekly. Sherburne Memorial Library, 2998 River Road, Killington. Free. [sherburnelibrary.org](http://sherburnelibrary.org), 802-422-9765 or 802-422-4251.

**Bone Builders**

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

**Friday Night Piano**

5-10 p.m. Weekly. Main Street Museum, 58 Bridge St., White River Junction. Free. Snacks & good company around the firepit to the music produced by piano rolls from the 1900s through the present — and from ABBA to Led Zeppelin. [mainstreetmuseum.org](http://mainstreetmuseum.org) or 802-356-2776

**Blue Cat Music Series: Rebecca Padula**

6-9 p.m. Weekly through March 22. Blue Cat Bistro, 575 Main St., Castleton. No cover. Dark folk-rock espresso with a shot of bluegrass and a hint of jazz. 802-468-2791

**Wobbly Barn: The Benderz**

6 p.m. Performing both Friday and Saturday night. The Wobbly Barn, 2229 Killington Road, Killington. Cover charge may be required. Philadelphia' favorite cover band. [killington.com](http://killington.com)

**The Vermont Mandolin Trio**

7 p.m. ArtisTree, 2095 Pomfret Road, South Pomfret. \$25. Bluegrass, jazz and roots, plus everything between J.S. Bach and Django Reinhardt. [artistreevt.org/artistree-events](http://artistreevt.org/artistree-events) or 802-457-3500

**Lee Brice: 'Me and My Guitar'**

7:30 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. \$109.30 per person including fees. Country singer-songwriter Brice has multiple platinum-winning hits to his name. Purchase through [ci.ovationtix.com/36265/production/1183390?performanceid=11381689](http://ci.ovationtix.com/36265/production/1183390?performanceid=11381689). Same night meet-and-greet available separately, with concert ticket.

**Pickle Barrel: The Zoo**

8 p.m. Performing both Friday and Saturday night. Pickle Barrel Nightclub, 1741 Killington Road Killington. \$15-\$20 at the door. [picklebarrelnightclub.com](http://picklebarrelnightclub.com)

**SATURDAY**

3/2

**10th annual Slash & Berm Banked Slalom**

Checkin and bibs, 8-9:30 a.m. \$50-\$65. The Stash Terrain Park, Killington Resort. Open to the general public, snowboarders only. Registration, details and rules at [killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/slash-and-berm](http://killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/slash-and-berm)

**The Vermont Winter Farmers' Market**

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Weekly. 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](http://vtfarmersmarket.org)

**Art at the Chaffee: Watercolor Painting for Kids**

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Monthly, 1st Saturday. Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland. \$25 covers all supplies. Ages: 6-10. Attendees follow along with instructor Kristen Partesi. Min. 5 students. max. 12. Must pre-register. [chaffeeartcenter.square.site](http://chaffeeartcenter.square.site) or 802-775-0356

**Art at the Chaffee: Drop 'N' Paint**

Noon-2 p.m. Saturdays. 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/](http://chaffeeartcenter.org/adult-classes-coming-soon/)

**Storytime: Night Sky!**

10-11 a.m. Weekly. Rutland Free Library, 10 Court St., Rutland. Fox Room. Ages 2 to 5. Storytime promotes early literacy and socialization skills in a fun setting. Each session might offer stories, movement, and an activity. No registration required, free and open to all. [rutlandfree.org/calendar-events/](http://rutlandfree.org/calendar-events/)

**Catholic Mass at Our Lady of the Mountains**

4:30 p.m. Weekly. The "little white church," 4173 US-4, Killington. Free. 802-457-2322 or [info@vermontcatholic.org](mailto:info@vermontcatholic.org)

**ADULT OPEN GYM:  
BASKETBALL**

FEB. 29, 7 PM





# DISCOUNT SKATE NIGHT

MARCH 5, 7:45 PM

### Adult Open Gym: Pickleball

7-9 p.m. Final day March 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

## MONDAY

3/4

### Okemo Innkeepers Race Series

10 a.m. Final day March 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. Weekly. 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. Are you looking for feedback on your poems? You are invited to join the Poetry Group at NWPL for sharing and critique. This group is open to all interested in poetry. RSVP. normanwilliams.org, 802-457-2295

### Woodshop: Butt-joint Basics

5-8 p.m. The MINT, 112 Quality Lane, Rutland. Members, \$75; not-yet-members, \$90. Let Dan show you how to operate power tools safely, in basic joinery techniques. Make and take home a wooden picture frame to fit an 8x10 print. rutlandmint.org/calendar

### Bianca del Rio: "Dead Inside" Comedy Tour

Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Alias Ray Haylock, she has been dubbed "The Joan Rivers of the Drag World." Tix at ci.ovationtix.com/36265/production/1183742

### Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Final day March 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

3/5

### Line Dance for Beginners

9:30 a.m. Weekly. Godnick Adult Center, 1 Deer St., Rutland. Line-dancing is fun! Get your cardio workout while following the moves with instructor Sharon McKee. No partner or experience needed. Learn old and new dances. Call 802-773-1853 for cost and to sign up.

### Play Chess & Backgammon!

5 p.m. Weekly. 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

### Adult Open Gym: Indoor Soccer

7-9 p.m. Final day March 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. Final day March 12. Giorgetti Arena, 2 Oak St. Ext., Rutland. \$2 admission, \$2 skate rental.

# Tick-tock tales: Spring ahead with Daylight Saving Time

Setting clocks ahead, known as "Daylight Saving Time" (DST), is a practice used to make better use of daylight during the longer days of spring and summer. It involves moving clocks forward by one hour in the spring and then back by one hour in the fall.

The concept of DST is rooted in the idea of maximizing daylight hours to align more closely with human activity patterns. The modern implementation of DST dates back to the early 20th Century and has historical and economic roots.

Despite its benefits, DST remains a topic of debate, with critics pointing to disruptions in sleep patterns, negative impacts on certain industries, and questions about its effectiveness in energy conservation. However, many regions around the world continue to observe DST as a way to optimize daylight hours and promote energy efficiency.

#### Energy Conservation:

One of the primary reasons for implementing DST was to save energy. By adjusting the clocks to match the natural daylight hours, people would use less artificial lighting in the evenings, reducing electricity consumption.



#### Economic Considerations:

DST also has economic implications. Longer daylight hours can boost retail sales, outdoor recreation, and tourism, as people have more time for leisure activities after work.



#### Health and Wellbeing:

Some proponents of DST argue that it has health benefits, such as reducing the risk of accidents and improving overall wellbeing by providing more opportunities for outdoor activities and exposure to sunlight.



#### Agricultural Benefits:

Farmers were early proponents of DST because it allowed them to make better use of daylight for farming activities. By having more daylight in the evening hours, farmers could work longer in the fields during planting and harvesting seasons.



#### Historical Context:

The idea of DST was first proposed by Benjamin Franklin in 1784 as a way to conserve candles. However, it wasn't until World War I that DST was implemented on a large scale, primarily to save fuel for the war effort. It was later reintroduced during World War II and became a consistent practice in many countries during the energy crises of the 1970s.



**Wobbly Barn: The Benderz**  
6 p.m. The Wobbly Barn, 2229 Killington Road, Killington. Cover charge may be required. Philadelphia' favorite cover band. killington.com

**Pickle Barrel: The Zoo**  
8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub, 1741 Killington Road, Killington. \$15-\$20 at the door. picklebarrelnightclub.com

## SUNDAY

3/3

### Slash & Berm Banked Slalom (continued).

The action concludes on Sunday with the Grom Slalom event (for competitors ages 13 & under), which will take place in the Li' Stash at Ramshead. Check-in, rules are the same. Registration, details and rules at killington.com/things-to-do/events/events-calendar/slash-and-berm

### St. James Episcopal Church 3rd Annual Online Auction

9 a.m. Final day 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.

### Vermont Symphony Orchestra: 'The Hollywood Sound'

3 p.m. Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. Adults, \$22-\$34; students, \$10 (includes fees); under 12, free with adult. A preconcert discussion precedes the matinee performance of "The Hollywood Sound" including suites from "The Godfather" and "Casablanca." Buy tix at ci.ovationtix.com/36265

### Pickle Barrel: Annie in the Water

7 p.m. Pickle Barrel, 1741 Killington Road, Killington. \$12-\$15, plus fees.

### Americana Indie Rock, with One-Time Weekend

Must be 21+ to attend. Tix at eventbrite.com/e/annie-in-the-water-with-one-time-weekend-presented-by-zero-gravity-tickets-794375016057?aff=oddttdcreator

# vote YES for our new school



*Our communities have a tradition of fiscal responsibility. That's why we need to build a new middle and high school now.*

*Waiting will only cost us more.*

**Build now. Save more.**

**article 7 | march 5th**

# [MUSIC Scene]

By DJ Dave Hoffenberg  
Have a music scene coming up? Email [djdavehoff@gmail.com](mailto:djdavehoff@gmail.com)

**WED**  
2/28

**KILLINGTON**

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Daniel Brown

4 p.m. North Star Lodge Star Lounge – Ski Bum Party with music by DJ Dave

6 p.m. Rivershed – Liz Reedy

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

**LUDLOW**

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

**QUECHEE**

6 p.m. Public House Pub – Kim Wilcox

**LUDLOW**

6:30 p.m. The Killarney – Irish Sessions with Gypsy Reel

**QUECHEE**

6:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Name That Tune Bingo with DJ Dave

**RUTLAND**

8 p.m. Angler Pub – A Sound Space Open Mic hosted by Caber

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

**SOUTH POMFRET**

7 p.m. Artistree – Open Mic

**RUTLAND**

6 p.m. American Legion – Ryan Fuller

**SOUTH POMFRET**

7 p.m. Artistree – The Vermont Mandolin Trio

**SAT**  
3/2

**BOMOSEEN**

5:30 p.m. Lake Bomoseen Lodge – James Joel

**BRIDGEWATER**

8 p.m. Woolen Mill Comedy Club – Comedy Night with Headliner Sharon Simon

**KILLINGTON**

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

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

6 p.m. Moguls Sports Pub – Duane Carleton

6 p.m. Rivershed – Mike Brown

6 p.m. Wobbly Barn – KGB

6:30 p.m. O'Dwyers Pub – County Down

6:30 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Liz Reedy

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

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

8 p.m. Northstar Lodge Lounge – Carl Anton

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – The Zoo

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

9:30 p.m. Wobbly Barn – The Benderz

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

**LUDLOW**

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

2 p.m. Apres Afternoons at Clock Tower – DJ Dave's Dance Party

2 p.m. Apres Afternoon at Jackson Gore – Dustin Marshall

7 p.m. The Killarney – Ruby Street

**PROCTORSVILLE**

4 p.m. Outer Limits Brewing – Eric King

**QUECHEE**

5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Rose Hip Jam

**STOCKBRIDGE**

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

**SUN**  
3/3

**KILLINGTON**

12 p.m. Rivershed – Brunch with Mike Brown

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

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

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

5:30 p.m. Mary Lou's – Daniel Brown

6 p.m. Liquid Art – Tee Boneicus Jones

6 p.m. Rivershed – Trivia

7 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Comedy & Cocktails with Headliner Sharon Simon

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

**STOCKBRIDGE**

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

**MON**  
3/4

**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 – Karaoke

**LUDLOW**

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

**TUES**  
3/5

**KILLINGTON**

4 p.m. North Star Lodge Star Lounge – Chamber Mixer with music by The Chunky Seltzers

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

**FRI**  
3/1

**CASTLETON**

6 p.m. Blue Cat Bistro – Rebecca Padula

**KILLINGTON**

1 p.m. Bear Mountain Base Lodge – Duane Carleton

2 p.m. K1 Base Lodge – Daniel Brown

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Nick Bredice

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

6 p.m. Rivershed – Mike Brown

7 p.m. Still on the Mountain – Nick Bredice

7 p.m. The Foundry – Jenny Porter

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

8 p.m. Pickle Barrel Nightclub – The Zoo

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 – The Benderz

**LONDONDERRY**

6 p.m. New American Grill – Sammy B

**QUECHEE**

5:30 p.m. Public House Pub – Kind Bud

**THURS**  
2/29

**BARNARD**

5:30 Fable Farm – Rumney Barn Sessions with Doug Perkins and Matt Flinner

**BRANDON**

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

**KILLINGTON**

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

2 p.m. Snowshed's Long Trail Pub – Duane Carleton

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

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



# How much is too much for a school

Killington Select Board Candidate Jim Haff explains the school bond, budget a

I've been on the school board for 15 of the past 16 years. I've watched the plans for a new building grow and develop and the process by which the \$99 million bond article now appears on the ballot for voters to approve or deny March 5.

I was, most recently, the chair of the buildings and grounds committee, so I'm also keenly aware of the structural disrepair the district school buildings face. I've often advocated for increased spending for maintenance and rehabilitation. Check the records. Specifically, I was the one that pushed to reopen the Pomfret school; I pushed for new heating systems (HVAC) in all the elementary schools; I pushed for upgrades to the middle school/high school doors for improved security when teachers had resorted to propping them open. More generally, for over a decade, I pushed for a larger budget for buildings and grounds in order to properly maintain our existing structures—which would have prevented some of the worst damage we're now seeing in the schools.

I also pushed the district to adopt a \$10 million proposal from Johnson Controls (JCI), half of which would have been guaranteed in future energy savings! It included not only new plumbing and electric at the middle school/high school, but also a \$1 million biomass boiler plant (that could be converted to serve a new high school down the road) but also solar panel carports and many other efficiency upgrades not only at the middle school/high school, but also at the areas' elementary schools! **See chart above,** which shows the \$9.2 million plan after the biomass plant was removed from the plans.



Originally Developed Scope

ECM #	Proposed Measure	Woodstock Union High/Middle School	Woodstock Elementary School	Prosper Valley School	Barnard Academy	Reading Elementary School	Killington Elementary School	WCSU Office
1	Lighting - Interior Retrofit	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Lighting - Exterior Retrofit	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
3	Building Envelope - Weatherization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Building Envelope - Attic Insulation						✓	
5	Building Envelope - Roof Replacement			✓			✓	
6	Facility Management System	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Demand Controlled Ventilation	✓				✓	✓	
8	Exhaust Fan Control	✓						
9	Unit Ventilator Upgrade	✓						
10	Air Handling Unit - ERV		✗					
10	Air Handling Unit - VFD on Fans	✓		✓		✓	✓	
11	Pumping System - VFD on Hot Water Pumps	✓				✓	✓	
12	Motors - Energy Efficient Motor Replacement	✓		✓		✓	✓	
13	Heating System - Boiler Burner Replacement	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
14	Heating System - Steam Trap Replacement	✗						
14	Heating System - Pipe and Valve Insulation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Water Conservation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Walk-in Coolers / Walk-in Freezers	✓	✓	✓				
17	Energy Efficient Transformers	✓						
18	Renewable Energy- Photovoltaic Generation	✓	✓	✓		✓	✗	
19	Lighting - Sports Fields	✗						
19	Window Replacement		✓					

Net Financed Investment Paid By Energy & O&M Savings:	
O&M Savings:	\$4,065,476
Customer Capital Contribution	\$5,134,528
Total Project Net Cost:	\$9,200,004
Loan Interest Rate:	4.72%
Loan Term in Years:	20
Annual Lease Payment:	\$318,524



So, for those of you who think I'm anti-spending, it's simply not true. But I am really frustrated listening to a small group that's been pushing ONLY for a new school building and telling voters it's the only option. That's simply not true!

At the Select Board Meeting Monday, Feb. 26, I brought JCI in to do a presentation for our board and voting public to see the original plan for \$10 million. It would have brought the schools up to code with improvements that would last 15-20 years giving us time for the state to figure out a better consolidation plan and reinstate state aid for regional hubs. The plan would have taken care of our elementary schools too.

The only reason any of the elementary schools have gotten any funding in recent years is because of a performance contract by JCI, as the district board has avoided bonds (except for the roof at Killington Elementary School) out of

fear of "bond fatigue" that might jeopardize their new build bond from passing.

Not only is that thinking short-sighted but so are the actual plans for the new building.

It's the wrong building; and the wrong time for it.

**"Newer and Fewer:" The new build is too small to be a regional hub**

The state is waking up to the severity of its education funding problems, which stem from losing 20% of the student population over the past 20 years. There are serious talks of further consolidation with a "Newer and Fewer" strategy possibly coming down the pike. This is the only way that the state can effectively solve the problem. But IF Woodstock middle school/high school wants to be that hub, why are we building a building for only 600 kids?

We need to plan to be a hub.



# ? Can YOU afford it?

## and how the correlating taxes will affect you

sat with the former Superintendent  
 ary Beth Banos four year ago and sug-  
 gested we go to the state and say: “Look,  
 are the No. 3 school in state and we  
 would love to be one of the main hubs  
 middle school/high school. But in  
 order for us to do that we need state  
 help to shut down other area schools.”  
 With this possibility, at buildings and  
 grounds I was pushing for a building for  
 100-1,200 students thinking about the  
 future, not just some immediate dream  
 area for our current population.  
 I recently asked the new build com-  
 mittee: “Are you at least planning struc-  
 tural engineering to add a third floor to  
 expand if we need it in the future?”  
 I was told “No.”  
 This plan makes no sense.

### The affordability problem

Mostly, in addition to it being a bad  
 plan, I’m afraid a \$4.5 million bond pay-

ment per year with only the possibility  
 of 150 additional students to offset any  
 costs, will make those of us who current-  
 ly live here unable to continue to afford  
 to live here.

This year alone, 6 of the 7 towns in the  
 district are seeing a 25% increase our  
 education taxes. Only Pomfret, which  
 recently did its reappraisal, is less at 15%  
 — because the district budget is up 15%!!

How can the administration give  
 themselves 5% raises in tough economic  
 times like this?

The district also used one-time money  
 from pandemic funds to hire perma-  
 nent positions, causing a 26% increase  
 in staff costs.

I’m also voting “NO” on the school  
 budget.

A “NO” vote on the new school bond is  
 not the end of this discussion. Rather it’s  
 just the beginning of better planning for  
 the future of our students.



“I enjoy serving this town. I’m definitely not  
 just a 1-2 topic candidate, but rather focus on  
 all subjects — town and school — that affect  
 voters and help out wherever I can.

“I’m hoping for your support, March 5.”

— Jim Haff

## Killington Forward: My next 3 years on the Select Board

Vote Jim Haff for Select Board on  
 March 5 for consistency, accountability

### I’m asking for your support.

Please vote for me to continue to serve you  
 on the Killington Select Board. We have a great  
 team and some important projects that I’d like to  
 help the town see through to completion.

### A few past Select Board accomplishments:

- TIF: Helped initiate and manage processes
- July flooding: helped coordinate recovery
- Golf Course: Helped turn around finances
- Named 2022 Volunteer of the Year by the town Recreation Department
- Part of Killington Select Board that was named 2023 Community Leader of the Year by the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region.



Paid for by  
 George Brant



# lash and Berm Banked Slalom returns

Friday, March 1- Sunday, March 3 at 8 a.m.—KILLINGTON—Killington Resort, Darkside Snowboards, and Burton are teaming up once again for the 10th Annual Slash & Berm Banked Slalom. Snowboarders will gather at The Stash terrain park in Killington to take advantage of the natural terrain and all the creative elements the mountain has to offer for a great cause.

This year, all proceeds from the event will be donated to the Friends of Rutland skatepark. The Friends of Rutland skatepark is an organization dedicated to building a concrete skatepark in the city of Rutland.

The action will start on Friday with a shop team invite-only banked slalom event—local shops will enter teams to compete for the Slash & Berm Banked Slalom title. The action continues on Saturday, when the event is open to all snowboarders and will be timed individually.

**New for this year:**

Groms (snowboarders ages 13 & under) will be able to test their chops alongside the adults in The Stash on Saturday! Additionally, instead of the Just for Fun run, is a switch run during the afternoon on Saturday. This will only be open to the first 50 participants who sign up!

The action concludes on Sunday with the Grom Slalom event (for competitors ages 13 & under), which will take place in the Lil' Stash at Ramshead.

**Divisions:**

- Grom Boys (13 & under)
- Grom Girls (13 & under)
- Open Men 13+
- Open Women 13+
- Legends Men 40+
- Legends Women 40+

**Rules:**

This competition is for snowboarders only. Due to the course location, there will be no spectator area on Friday or Saturday. 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.

- Friday: four team members will take two runs each. Top three individual times are combined for best time: One missed gate results in a disqualified run.
- Saturday: Best of two runs; one missed gate results in a disqualified run.

**Volunteers:**

Killington Resort will host all three days of the event, and we are looking for volunteer to help in 3 key areas: Registration, Gate Checkers and Runners. Volunteers will receive a lift ticket to return to Killington for every shift worked. Lift tickets earned are valid 1 year from the date they are received. Lunch will also be provided for each shift worked. Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older.

Sign-up is on a first-come, first-served basis and you will be e-mailed a confirmation upon sign-up.

For registration and further information, visit: [killington.com](http://killington.com)



Courtesy Killington Resort

## Game night with RYP and the Hub CoWorks promises to be a fun-filled evening

Feb. 29 at 5 p.m.—RUTLAND—Rutland Young Professionals (RYP) and The Hub CoWorks are teaming up to host an exciting game night, inviting the community to join them for an evening of friendly competition and camaraderie. The event will take place at The Hub CoWorks, located at 67 Merchants Row, Suite 201 (2nd floor) in Rutland.

Attendees can look forward to an array of board games, card games, and opportunities to connect with fellow community members. Food and beverages will be provided. Guests are encouraged to bring their favorite games and their competitive spirit. Additionally, there will be raffle prizes up for grabs, adding to the excitement of the evening.

Admission to the game night is free, but space is limited, so attendees are encouraged to secure their spot early.

For more information and to reserve a spot visit: [thehubvt.com](http://thehubvt.com)



Courtesy The Hub Co Works

Rutland Young Professionals (RYP) and The Hub CoWorks are partnering to host a game night on Feb. 29 at 5 p.m. at The Hub CoWorks.

## Letterkenny presents: A night of stand-up comedy at the Paramount Theatre

Wednesday, Feb. 28 at 8 p.m.—RUTLAND—Fans of the hit Canadian sitcom "Letterkenny" are in for a treat as the characters step out from the screen and onto the stage for a night of stand-up comedy at Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland.

Headlined by Mark Forward, known for his role as "Coach" on the show, the event will also feature stand-up sets by Jeff McEnery, who portrays "Alexander," and Allie Pearse, a writer for both "Letterkenny" and the spin-off sitcom "Shoresy."

Described as "a surreal Canadian Comedy to rival Schitt's Creek" by The New Yorker and hailed as "one of the most endearing and smartest comedies on TV" by Forbes, "Letterkenny" has garnered a devoted fanbase over its 12 seasons and received numerous awards, including a Canadian Screen Award for "Best Comedy Series."

In addition to "Letterkenny," creator Jared Keeso has also produced the sitcom "Shoresy," which stars Keeso himself and is also available for streaming.

For more information, visit: [paramountvt.org](http://paramountvt.org)



Courtesy paramount Theatre  
Mark Forward



Courtesy The Zoo

The Zoo, a popular nightclub band, will perform at Pickle Barrel Nightclub in Killington on March 2. The band, known for their versatility, has performed at events like the New York Islander and the NHL's Winter Classic.

## The Zoo is let loose at the Pickle Barrel

Saturday, March 2 at 8 p.m.—KILLINGTON—Why would anyone remember June 12, 1994? Well, that's the day of the famous O.J. Simpson slow-speed chase. It was also the day of The Zoo's very first live engagement and they've been running at high-speed ever since. Their skyrocketing popularity has been highlighted by an appearance on TRL (Total Request Live) hosted by Carson Daly, as well as appearances on MTV's Ultimate Cover Band contest, the latter of which culminated in The Zoo reaching the prize winners' platform.

The Zoo, long a nightclub favorite, has become increasingly popular on the corporate and private event circuit. The New York Islanders have been fans of the band for years and The Zoo has not only performed for the New York Islander organization, but was even chosen to perform at the National Hockey League's Winter Classic at Fenway Park in Boston.

The Zoo is a band that's always on the go and never afraid to travel. The band has performed at destination weddings from Cape Cod to Miami and nightclubs from the deserts of Las Vegas to the ski slopes of Vermont.

The Zoo is one versatile band. This is a group that is just as comfortable performing in a posh gala as they are performing in front of a raucous beach crowd. Nobody knows how to keep a party going like front man and founding member, Randall John. He and female lead vocalist Ginger DeVito front this powerhouse of a band. Randy has kept the line-up youthful over the years and the current line-up is perhaps the freshest and hottest yet.

The Zoo will perform at the Pickle Barrel Nightclub on 1741 Killington Road, Killington Saturday.

For more information visit: [picklebarrel-nightclub.com](http://picklebarrel-nightclub.com)

# THE PARTY STORE

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- Shamrock Tableware
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- Festive Décor
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MONDAY-SATURDAY  
10 A.M. - 5 P.M.

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**RUTLAND 60 U.S. Rte. 7 (near Kinney Subaru) 773-0677**



# BarnArts holds second community Contra Dance of the year on Friday

All-ages dance and potluck kicks off March 1

Friday, March 1, at 6 p.m.—BARNARD—The next BarnArts Community Contra Dance will be held at the Barnard Town Hall, 115 North Road, Barnard on Friday, March 1. A potluck begins at 6 p.m. and dancing will go from 6:30-9 p.m. The potluck part of the event, sponsored by The Mountain School, will feature a plethora of dishes from the unique Vershire school's cooking class.

Music will be provided by local favorites Blind Squirrel with calling by Erin Smith. Blind Squirrel features Upper Valley musicians and ardent dancers Erin Smith and Steve Hoffman on fiddle, Suzanne Long on fiddle/cello, Christina Jeske on whistle, and Chip Hedler on guitar.

They have been an ensemble for nearly a decade and their love of the music and the joy of playing together for dancers

keeps them going. Their repertoire draws on French Canadian, southern old-time, celtic, and northern New England traditions.

All ages and experience levels are welcome to join in on the fun! Many students from The Mountain School will be in attendance, learning contra dancing for the first time. Come with a group, as a couple, or by yourself and be ready for a lively night making new friends. Partners are mixed and matched before each dance and everyone has plenty of dancing opportunities.

Community members are also welcome to just come for the potluck, watch the dancing, and see what it's all about.

Please bring indoors shoes to keep the dance floor clean. The event is free, with donations appreciated.

For more info and to reserve a spot, visit: [barnarts.org](http://barnarts.org).



Courtesy BarnArts

BarnArts Center for the Arts is hosting its second Community Contra Dance on March 1 at Barnard Town Hall. The event features a potluck, dancing, and music by Blind Squirrel. Participants are welcome of all ages and experience levels, and partners are encouraged to mix and swap. The event is free, and donations are appreciated.

## Experience the magic of Hollywood soundtracks with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra at the Paramount Theatre

Sunday, March 3 at 3 p.m.—RUTLAND—The Vermont Symphony Orchestra (VSO) invites audiences to embark on a musical journey with its "The Hollywood Sound" concert. Held at The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland, this event celebrates the iconic film scores that have shaped cinematic experiences over the past 80 years.

Under the baton of VSO Music Director Andrew Crust, attendees will be treated to a diverse selection of film music, ranging from the allure of American dramas to the realms of Japanese anime. The concert will feature VSO Concertmaster Katherine Winterstein, who will perform Korngold's enchanting 1945 film score-infused violin concerto.

Before the concert, guests are invited to the complimentary pre-concert discussion, "Musically Speaking," starting at 2 p.m. This session offers insights into the evening's program, enhancing the overall concert experience.

### Ticket Information:

Adults: \$22, \$34 + tax/fees/Students: \$10 + tax/fees. Children under 12: Free with accompanying adult (each child's ticket must have a corresponding adult ticket to be valid)

Tix: [ci.ovationtix.com/36265](http://ci.ovationtix.com/36265).

### Program:

- Nino Rota: Godfather Suite
- Joe Hisaishi: Symphonic Variation "Merry-Go-Round" from Howl's Moving Castle
- Bernard Hermann: Psycho Suite for Strings
- Max Steiner: Casablanca Suite
- Erich Korngold: Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

For more information, visit: [paramountvt.org](http://paramountvt.org).

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## Explore the future of humanity on Leap Day with Robert Black

Thursday, Feb. 29 at noon—RUTLAND— Adults are invited to embark on a journey into the unknown with Robert Black, artist Robert Black, collagist, photographer, and architect, for a series of talks and hands-on sessions centered around the theme "One Giant Leap for Humanity."

In these engaging sessions, participants will explore what the future may bring with new awareness of psyche and physics to bring new perspectives of life forming in us by the shiny technology of AI and by the mind-blowing images of the James Webb Space Telescope.

**Event Details:**

- Date: Feb. 29
- Time: Noon-2 p.m.
- Location: Chaffee Art Center, 16 So. Main St., Rutland.

**Sessions:**

**Session I: Lunch 'N Learn-12 noon-2 p.m.**

Introductory discussion, brief talk/slide presentation, followed by a collaborative conversation where participants can share their impressions of the topic presented. Participants may bring their own lunches and attend only Session I.

**Session II: ARTLAB-1 p.m.-2 p.m.**

A fun, creative, hands-on activity to explore participants' expressions of the day's theme in Session I. All materials will be provided. Participants are encouraged to attend both Session I & Session II for the richest experience.

**Ticket information:**

- \$25 for the full 2-hour session
  - \$20 for 1 hour
- Must pre-register

For more information and to register, visit: [chaffeeartcenter.org](http://chaffeeartcenter.org) or call 802-775-0356.



Submitted

James Webb Space Telescope

## Town Meeting Pasta Dinner Take Out

**Monday, March 4**

**Drive Thru at the**

**Public Safety Building on the  
 Killington Road**

**Lasagna/Salad/Bread/Dessert**



**Serving from 4:30–6:00**

**Suggested Donation \$5**

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# Lunar phase

By Pat Wise

Midnight sky,  
 Sphere glows bright  
 Cast ethereal beams at night.  
 Full moon gleaming satellite  
 Set controls for patterned flight  
 Captive sight,  
 Cosmic trance,  
 Darkness brightened, glow enhanced.  
 Guiding souls  
 From distance far  
 Guarding dreams  
 Where light is sparse  
 Through darks embrace  
 On endless days  
 Captivating lunar phase.



The full moon has been quite noticeable the last few nights as the moon has reached a lunar phase when the sun illuminates 99.9% of the moon's face. It occurs when the sun and moon are aligned on opposite sides of Earth, with 12 full moons per year. The moon's orbit is characterized by perigee and apogee points, with supermoons near the perigee and micromoons near the apogee. Changes in perspective allow up to 59% of the moon's surface to be visible from Earth. The full moon phase has influenced human culture for millennia, including Easter Sunday, deities, mental illness, supernatural transformations, sleep, crime, and more.



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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](http://www.killingtontown.com)

DATE POSTED: February 21, 2024

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**RUTLAND CO-OP** *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](http://rutlandcoop.com) 802-773-0737



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**got news?**  
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Email us at [editor@mountaintimes.info](mailto:editor@mountaintimes.info)



*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.



*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](http://www.vtsugarandspice.com) 802-773-7832.

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*Killington Market*

Take breakfast, lunch or dinner on the go at Killington Market, Killington's on-mountain grocery store for the last 30 years. Choose from breakfast sandwiches, hand carved dinners, pizza, daily fresh hot panini, roast chicken, salad and specialty sandwiches. Vermont products, maple syrup, fresh meat and produce along with wine and beer are also for sale. [killingtonmarket.com](http://killingtonmarket.com) 802-422-7736 or 802-422-7594.

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2841 Killington Rd | Killington, VT 05751



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Open 8 nights a week (Closed Wednesday)

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Choices Restaurant and Rotisserie was named 2012 "Ski" magazine's favorite restaurant. Choices may be the name of the restaurant but it is also what you get. Soup of the day, shrimp cocktail, steak, hamburgers, a variety of salads and pastas, scallops, monkfish, lamb and more await you. An extensive wine list and in house made desserts are also available. [choicesrestaurantkillington.com](http://choicesrestaurantkillington.com) (802) 422-4030.

**MOGULS**  
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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](http://maryloukillington.com)



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**Lookout Tavern**

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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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(802) 772-7556  
170 S Main Street, Rutland, VT

**Solutions** From page 19

**Crossword**

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

**Sudoku**

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

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**TAKE OUT**



## Lee Brice's old-out performance marks a night of country music excellence

Friday, March 1 at 7:30 p.m.—RUTLAND—  
Multi-Platinum selling country music sensation Lee Brice is set to deliver a remarkable performance at the Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St., Rutland. With all tickets sold out, fans are anticipating an unforgettable evening of music. Lee Brice boasts an impressive track record with nine radio singles reaching the #1 spot, including chart-toppers like “A Woman Like You,” “Hard to Love,” and “I Drive Your Truck.” His lyrics have resonated with audiences worldwide, earning him multiple RIAA certifications and prestigious awards in the country music industry.

Among his acclaimed hits are the Platinum-selling “Memory I Don’t Mess With,” ASCAP’s 2021 Country Song of the Year “One of Them Girls,” and the chart-topping duet “I Hope You’re Happy Now” with Carly Pearce, which has achieved 3x Platinum status. Brice’s 4x Platinum hit “Rumor” has also received accolades, including a nomination for Single of the Year at the 55th Annual ACM Awards.

For more information, visit: [paramountvt.org](http://paramountvt.org).



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Courtesy of Rutland County Head Start

Rutland County Head Start has expanded its infants' and toddlers' program to offer high-quality early learning, health care, and nutrition support. The program, funded by grants from The Bowse Trust and Let's Grow Kids, is expected to open on Thursday, Feb. 29 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The program, which offers holistic support for families, includes support groups, resources, and classroom environments designed to encourage exploration, learning, and connection.

## Celebrate Rutland County's first Early Head Start program for infants and toddlers

Thursday, Feb. 29 at 3 p.m.—RUTLAND—This year's Leap Day marks a huge leap forward for early childhood education in Rutland County.

Thanks to the tireless work of local community leaders and legislators, Rutland County Head Start has expanded to offer the nationally recognized program for infants and toddlers to Rutland County families. The new program was also made possible through grant support provided by The Bowse Trust and Let's Grow Kids.

Rutland City Mayor Mike Doenges, representatives from the offices of Vermont's legislative delegation, and other community leaders will be on hand to celebrate Rutland County's first ever Early Head Start (EHS) program with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 29, at 78 Meadow St. in Rutland. The event will begin with refreshments and a tour of the new Family Resource, Art & Literacy Center at 3 p.m. followed by the ribbon cutting at 3:15 p.m. and tours of the new Early Head Start classrooms.

U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders highlighted the importance of the program for Rutland County families, saying: "It is good news that Rutland County Head Start is opening its first Early Head Start program to offer infants, toddlers, and their families high-quality early learning, as well as health care and nutrition support. Ages 0 to 4 are the most important years of human life intellectually and emotionally. It should come as no surprise to learn that when children have early care and education, they perform better throughout school, are less likely to interact with the criminal justice system, and report increased overall happiness later in life. We, as a nation, must do more to invest in federally-funded programs like Head Start and Early Head Start, so that all families have quality child care at a cost they can afford."

U.S. Representative Becca Balint agreed, adding: "Head Start programs are transformational for children and their families, setting up our children for success from the very beginning. For over 30 years, Rutland County Head Start has served the Rutland community high-quality, holistic early childhood education. The expansion of infant and toddler programs will mean alleviating the burden of childcare for more families through quality education. As a parent and a former teacher, I know how critical these programs are for the whole community. Investment in Head Start is an im-

portant step in continuing to put working families first and I look forward to the impact this will have on the communities for years to come."

U.S. Senator Peter Welch emphasized the importance of partnerships in meeting community needs. "Developing a strong educational foundation at an early age is crucial to a child's long-term development," said Welch. "There is a high demand for educational programs like Rutland's first Early Head Start program and we're going to keep working with Vermont's childcare leaders and state and local partners to give all families across our state the space to learn, grow, and thrive in our communities."

Dick Courcelle, chief executive officer of Community Care Network, reiterated the importance of community support. "After many years of planning, Community Care Network is honored to have the opportunity to operate the first Early Head Start program in the Rutland Region," said Courcelle. "We are thankful for the seed funding to kickstart this new program, as well as the strong backing we received from Vermont's congressional delegation, namely Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Peter Welch and Representative Becca Balint, which underscored the important role Head Start plays in supporting family stabilization and school readiness for children and families here in Rutland County."

Donna Barrow, Ed.D., Rutland County Head Start director, emphasized that Early Head Start offers much more than a typical preschool or daycare. "Like our traditional Head Start program for preschool children, Early Head Start provides the highest-quality early education and care from highly trained staff and holistic support for the entire family," said Barrow. "We provide family centered services. Our highly-trained, responsive teachers use the Creative Curriculum model, which is the leading and top-rated whole-child curriculum to support infants, toddlers, preschoolers and caregivers. And, our programs are free for eligible families."

"Rutland County Head Start is known for high-quality programming, and the Early Head Start program too will be

based on best practices and the highest quality standards of care which are crucial to healthy development and learning," added Courcelle.

Services for Early Head Start parents and caregivers include support groups and resources to address individual needs such as housing stability, transportation, and assistance in meeting personal goals such as returning to college, starting a business, or developing leadership skills as part of the organization's policy council. Classroom environments are designed to intentionally create opportunities for babies, toddlers, and caregivers to explore, learn, and connect.

"High quality infant and toddler care is badly needed in our community, and this program will provide just that along with comprehensive family services," added Courcelle. "It will also complement our long-standing Head Start preschool program. We look forward to further expanding our programming in the years ahead."

Early Head Start features low teacher/child ratios and focus on early attachment, healthy development and nutritional needs. Expertly trained program teams promote physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development to prepare children for continued growth, development, and later success in primary school.

Rutland City Mayor Mike Doenges summarized the importance of the Early Head Start expansion. "Rutland City, like many other communities, is in need of innovative childcare solutions that meet the needs of local families," said Doenges. "Early Head Start couldn't come at a better time, filling a crucial gap in services that is desperately needed in our city. This program goes beyond childcare, working directly with families and providing much-needed resources that we see demand for in our community every day. It's not just about nurturing children; it's about empowering families and building a stronger, more resilient community for generations to come."

For more info visit: [RutlandCountyHeadStart.org](https://RutlandCountyHeadStart.org).

The expansion of infant and toddler programs will mean alleviating the burden of childcare for more families through quality education.

# Rutland County Humane Society



**JOHNNY**

Johnny is a 3-4 yr old large guy that does very well with his feline roommates. After being tossed outside by his owner he has learned to love and trust people again. Johnny enjoys pets and needs a soft place to land where he will never be disappointed by people again! We are open Wed.-Sat. from Noon to 4 p.m. for walk-ins. Join us March 2nd from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. for our rabies, distemper and microchip clinic.

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 \*Open by appointment only. [spfldhumane.org](http://spfldhumane.org)



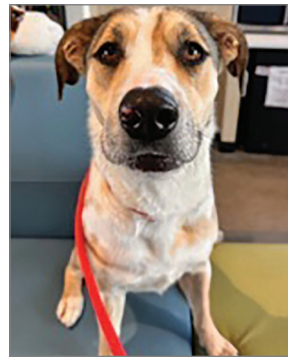
**NINA**

Nina—9-year-old spayed female. I came to Lucy Mackenzie with my best friend, Maria, after our previous owner could sadly no longer take care of us due to health reasons. We're here now, though, and this is the best place for us to be while we wait to begin our next chapter. We're both affectionate little souls with a lot of love to give. Oh, and we're extremely bonded! So, we would like to live together with the same family once we find our forever home. We're so bonded we even drafted this "write-up" together!

This pet is available for adoption at  
**Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society**  
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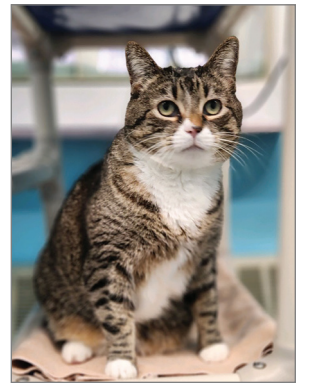
Remy—2 y/o. Spayed female. Heeler mix.



Malibu—2 y/o. Mixed breed. Spayed female.



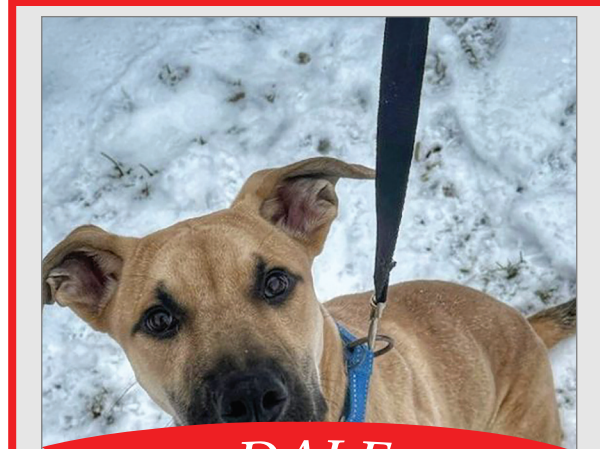
Maddy-Jack—2 y/o. Spayed female. Beagle mix.



Pop Tart—6 y/o. Spayed female. Domestic shorthair.



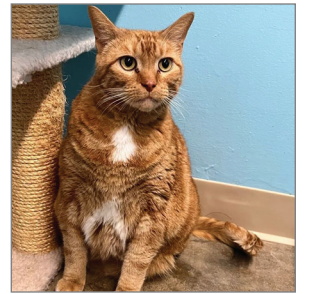
Tib—1 y/o. Spayed female. Domestic shorthair.



**DALE**

Dale—5-month-old. Blackmouth Cur mix.

All of these pets are available for adoption at  
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King—10 y/o. Neutered male. Domestic shorthair. Orange tiger.



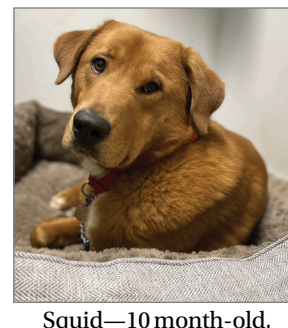
Odin—2-3 y/o. Neutered male. Domestic shorthair. Brown tiger.



Fib—3 y/o. Spayed female. Domestic shorthair.



Leland—3 y/o. Neutered male. Domestic longhair.



Squid—10 month-old, Neutered male. Mixed breed.



Mittens—12 y/o. Spayed female. Domestic shorthair.

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# Cosmic Catalogue



## **Aries** March 21 - April 20

You can't be everything to everyone, at least not all of the time. This is what you're trying to be right now and it's unlike you. Who are you trying to impress? You're only setting yourself up for failure being something that you're not. This week, take some time out for yourself and ask, "is what I am doing actually what I want?" You might be surprised by your own honesty!

## **Leo** July 21 - August 20

Getting on top of what you earn, Gown and owe would help a lot this week. Naturally, this has got something to do with your finances. Also, it may have something to do with other kinds of entanglements you share with others. Somewhere along the line, a boundary has to be drawn if the amount of give and take is out of balance. A tough conversation is overdue. Have it and the situation will be so much better.

## **Sagittarius** November 21 - December 20

Logistics and obligations on the Lhome front will be unavoidable this week. Just when you thought you could rest and settle down, there is more to be done. Even if the life you're living right now isn't quite the life you want, keep in mind that the Cosmos is testing you right now. It won't be too much longer before life, once again, feels a little breezier and light. Hang in there.

## **Taurus** April 21 - May 20

In this day and age, there seems Ito be quite a gap between online and in real life. In some ways, so it should be! While in others, it can lead you into a false sense of reality. You may need to be increasingly cautious about what you do and don't share or communicate online or within a friendship group. Not everyone who smiles at you is a friend. Draw your line and stand by it.

## **Virgo** August 21 - September 20

To say it will be a tough week in Tterms of relationships is an understatement. Tough doesn't mean disaster though. Please understand that. A few rough patches are to be expected in a relationship that actually has substance to it. If you're questioning that very substance, then this week, you'll find out if it's got the good or not. Don't be afraid of asking the hard questions. You deserve honest answers. Make sure you get them.

## **Capricorn** December 21 - January 20

As a rule, you're not afraid of hav-Aing an honest conversation. You can handle the tough parts in most situations. However, right now, you're learning so much about yourself. As new revelations come to light, new realities dawn upon you about who you are. You may discover that you want something different from what you once promised yourself. Let yourself off the hook a little bit. It's OK if you change your mind. In fact, you must.

## **Gemini** May 21 - June 20

The more organized you are this Tweek, the better life will be for you. Write a list of all your tasks and obligations, as well as all the other things on your mind you need to do. List them in order of priority and stick to it. Do your best to ignore any distractions that pop up. When it comes to your career and reputation, don't be afraid to ask the question if you need answers!

## **Libra** September 21 - October 20

Don't put off until tomorrow what Dcan be done today. Sure, it may not be what you want to do, but it is what you have to do. Face that reality and you'll be better for it. Also, there is the possibility that you've had enough of playing life small. If there is something you've reached your limit with, you may need to admit that. This isn't the week to go along to get along.

## **Aquarius** January 21 - February 20

If there was ever a week to get crys-tal clear about your money situation, this is it! You need to find out exactly what you earn, own and owe. If you don't, a tough reality may begin to dawn upon you. If you've already got this part of your life in order, then good on you! In either case, benefit can be drawn from making some new goals that can only improve your bank balance and your confidence.

## **Cancer** June 21 - July 20

There's so much you want to do and Texplore right now. Despite there being so many options, you feel limited by the array of choices. You want to do it all, but time and money is of the essence. Soon, the next eclipse season will be upon us. What your life direction and family life look like will start to change. Make your choices based on what could be, rather than what you think should be.

## **Scorpio** October 21 - November 20

Aromantic situation could reach a Tipping point of sorts. Perhaps some hard questions need to be asked. If more honesty is required, make sure you get it. If that honesty is asked of you, make sure you give it. This isn't the week to mince your words or be evasive. If you do, the only one who's like to suffer will be you. So, either face up to your reality or your reality will face you.

## **Pisces** February 21 - March 20

You can expect life to feel a lit-tle bit heavier this week. As the weight increases, so does your capacity to make clearer choices that are right for you. While you may have to make some decisions you'd rather not make, you'll be better off in the long run for making them. Don't let what you want now distract you from what you want most. Keep the long term in mind when it comes to the decisions you're making now.

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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.

## The price of honesty

People avoid being honest. There are many reasons for it, most of them go unrecognized. You might think it's not to hurt anyone's feelings. Maybe it's in an attempt to be polite or not rock the boat. It's also possible that they choose to rationalize it away rather than connecting with what their intuition tells them.

What many people fail to admit is that to be frank, direct and honest also means that rejection is also very possible. What if he/she won't like me anymore or take offense and react in a negative way? What if I lose Instagram followers?

When you really dig into it, a lack of honesty often comes from fear, a lack of worthiness.

It doesn't matter if it's your partner, lover, boss, friend or social media following, this week brings the chance to get crystal clear about an issue that you might be otherwise tempted to turn a blind eye to. But, at what cost? Yes, there's always a price to pay.

Failure to address even the smallest details or ask a question will only harbor future resentments. This week, be mindful of what you choose to ignore or the price will be more than you're willing to pay.



Cosmic Catalogue  
By Cassandra Tyndall

## The reminder of the wind

Wind blows through the trees,  
The leafless branches sway,  
As chickadees fly over to them,  
Flapping their little wings using the winds.

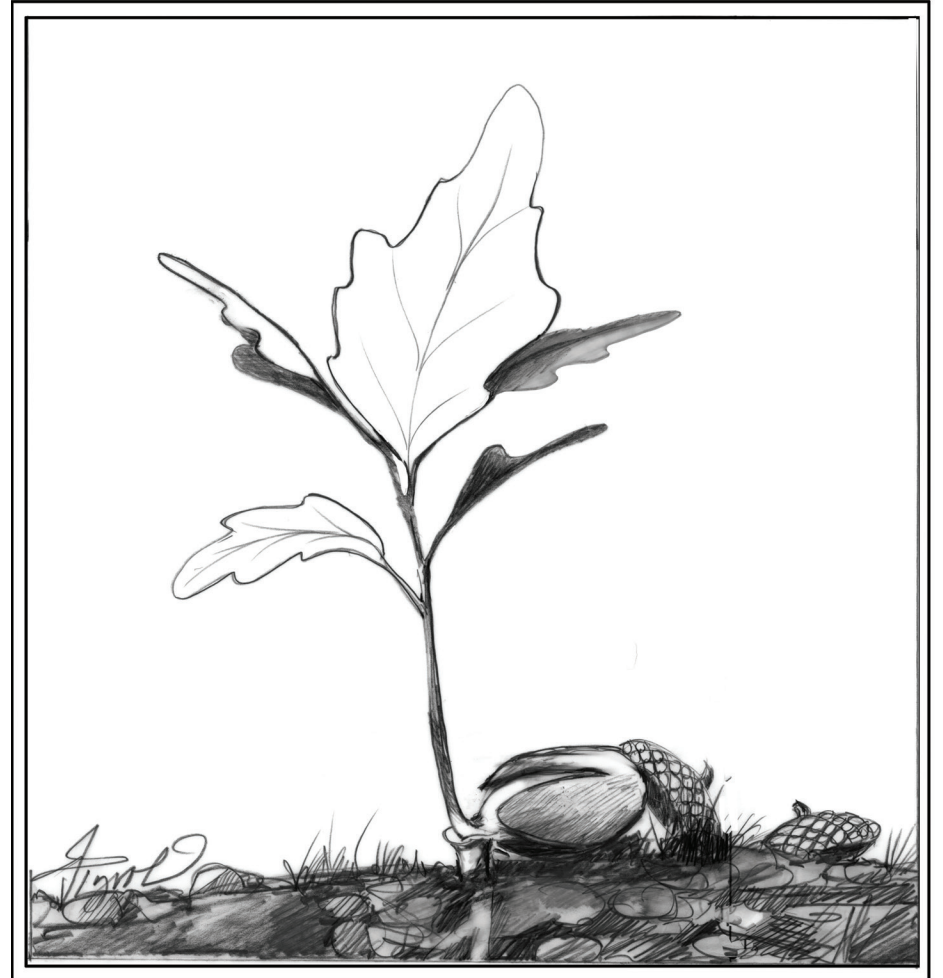
Wind blows the snow,  
Across frozen lakes,  
The ice clear as glass,  
Little snowflakes sparkling,  
As the wind blows them further.

Wind blows kindness everywhere,  
It is here to help,  
From person to person,  
Animal to animal,  
The wind blows kindness,  
As a little reminder.

The wind tells us that,  
It is important to spread love,  
It is important to spread joy,  
Listen to the wind's little reminders,  
Spread kindness everywhere every day.



Poetry Is Power  
By Bree Sarandrea



## The humble acorn: A feast for wildlife

In a big mast year for oak trees, it seems like there's a constant barrage of acorns thwacking roofs, parked cars, and — sometimes — unsuspecting humans. These falling nuts can seem a nuisance. But when I look closely at a little acorn with its tidy hat and imagine its future, I'm reminded of what a miraculous object it is.

The acorn is a perfectly designed container packed with potential. It holds the seed that may become a towering tree that will shelter and feed thousands of creatures throughout its lifetime — including many animals that rely on acorns for winter survival. The tree's trunk could one day become part of a timber-frame home, or it may provide fuel for a woodstove in the 22nd Century.

Oak species are divided into two groups: white oaks or black (sometimes referred to as red) oaks. In the Northeast, the white oak group includes swamp white oak, chestnut oak, and burr oak. The black oak group includes Northern red oak, black oak, scarlet oak, and bear oak.

Most of the acorns near my house drop from the Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), one of the most widespread oak species in the northeast. Its nut is about 1 inch long, and roughly the same width, giving it a rounded shape. Its cap is thin and flat like a beret, with tight, overlapping scales. This acorn spends two growing seasons on the

tree, and after falling on the ground lies dormant through the winter, germinating the following spring.

My woodlands also contain white oak (*Quercus alba*), whose acorn is longer than it is wide and has a thicker, more rounded cap with bumpy scales that do not overlap. The cap covers about 1 quarter of the nut. This acorn matures in a single season, dropping in early fall and germinating almost immediately, often within a week.

For wildlife, acorns are an essential staple. They are high in calories and fat and contain protein and minerals such as calcium, potassium, and phosphorus. "They are a great nugget of energy for little rodents all the way up to black bear and deer," said Steven Roberge, a forestry specialist and professor with University of New Hampshire Extension. "An animal has to eat a lot of leaves or bark to get such a big nutritional punch."

While all oaks produce acorns, not all acorns are created equal, and the acorns of each group have different characteristics as a food source. Those in the black oak group have more fat, and therefore provide more energy, than those of white oaks. However, these acorns also contain a higher level of tannins, making them less palatable. Most animals favor the sweeter and more digestible white oak acorns. Gray squirrels are



The Outside Story  
By Laurie D. Morrissey

## Get up, stand up!

A few weeks ago, the U.S. State Department issued a level 3 travel advisory for Jamaica due to crime and lack of medical services. A level 3 travel advisory is classified as “Reconsider travel.” The only level worse is a level 4 advisory, which means, “Do not travel to this location.”

It was further noted in a report that local police do not respond effectively to serious crimes, and when arrests are made, cases are infrequently prosecuted. Violent crimes, such as armed robberies, sexual assault, home invasions, and homicides are considered common.

(I hate to say it, but if you’re the person in charge of tourism for Jamaica, you’ve got your work cut out for you for the foreseeable future.)

I visited Jamaica when I was in high school in the early 1980s. My parents decided to take me for a graduation gift, but the most surprising part was that they let me bring my girlfriend (more on that in a minute).

I didn’t find out until years later that our entire trip (excluding flights) was comped by my father’s childhood best friend. The two had not seen each other for years and had recently reconnected. It was then that my father’s friend invited him to Kingstown, Jamaica, for a week at the hotel he managed.

My father grew up very blue collar and the friends he kept were of the same ilk. This particular friend had a rough upbringing, but somehow managed to graduate from high school, put himself through college, and eventually find success in the hotel management business. He started at small resorts and by the middle of his career had settled into managing large resort hotels in the Caribbean.

We flew down during spring break and were met at the airport by an arranged car that brought us to the hotel. The level of poverty interspersed with island vibes made for an odd juxtaposition for a country boy from the Northeast. I might as well have been on a different planet.

The resort was fantastic, with multiple pools and fountains, luxurious accommodations, and daily cuisine opportunities that challenged all my preconceived notions of what food could taste like. In those days, you could not find a mango or papaya in a U.S. grocery store, but on that trip, I fell in love with the tropical fruit.

We toured the safer parts of the island, always with a driver and a “host.” I think we all knew the host was for protection, but we

assumed it was just a precaution since we were special guests.

My girlfriend and I took advantage of everything the resort and accompanying beach had to offer, but I’m confident that we spent a good portion of our time trying to outwit my parents so we could sneak away to have some “fun.”

One of my passions at that age was music and I was intent to go home with some legitimate reggae albums to add to my collection. I knew who Bob Marley was, but outside of “I Shot the Sheriff,” I couldn’t tell you another song he wrote or much about him as a person.

That changed quickly.

From the moment that we arrived in Jamaica, it was apparent that Bob Marley was a national hero. Everywhere you looked had reflections of Marley’s presence with graffiti, banners, and signage dedicated to his memory. I quickly began to understand how important Marley was not only as a musician but also as the voice of a people.

I eventually found my way into a local record store and asked the dreadlocked proprietor to help me with a selection of albums to buy. He suggested Yellowman, Peter Tosh, and Jimmy Cliff, but insisted that I purchase “Confrontation” by Bob Marley.

“Confrontation” was released posthumously and is not often cited as one of his best albums, but to me, it encompassed my entire Jamaican experience. And to this day, that album remains my favorite Marley composition.

It was only a matter of time before a major motion picture depicting Bob Marley’s life would be developed. And now, thanks to his family members, “Bob Marley: One Love” has hit the big screen.

This film is a wonderful tribute to the man, his message, and the music. The acting is solid, the story is all-compassing, and the music production is topnotch. My only complaint is that I had a hard time understanding the Rastafarian dialect during character conversations. However, I would note that I would prefer to struggle with my understanding rather than have the realism of the speech be softened for audience convenience.

Check this one out if you love Marley’s music or are curious about the man behind the myth.

A harmonious “B” for “Bob Marley: One Love,” now playing in theaters everywhere.

Got a question or comment for Dom? You can email him at [moviediary@att.net](mailto:moviediary@att.net).



The Movie  
Diary  
By Dom Cioffi



## Quintessential East Coast steeps

*Author’s note: I use the male gender here to describe the skiers because women are usually not stupid enough to ski Lower O when it sucks. At least they didn’t this past weekend.*

Living here in Killington we just get spoiled, even with a desk job. Well, a moveable desk job, that is. This morning, I have set my computer up in the Superstar Room of the Killington Ski Club. I have a perfect view of the World Cup Trail and a front row seat to all the excitement that is Lower Ovation.



Living the Dream  
By Merisa  
Sherman

Since its construction in the 1980s, Ovation has fascinated skiers and watchers alike. It’s hidden to the side of Superstar, a scary little sibling that most people avoid. While Superstar is always groomed to “perfection,” Ovation is left to the elements. The skier’s right can have a West Coast feel to it as you ski through the bushes on the same day that the left side can be a gnarly wind blown mess. And that’s before you roll over the final pitch.

While I feel the ungroomed headwall with its insane entrance is the most challenging and fun turn on the mountain, the bottom pushes the limits. A few years ago, a groomer friend sent a pic of his tractor on Lower O showing a 38.8 degree pitch (or around 80%). Can you imagine what it’s like when they build a mound of snow that then proceeds to slide down on its own? It was fun checking out the fissure as we rode by on the gondola a few weeks ago.

When you have a view of Lower Ovation, you start to notice things. Like how so many people cannot manage to stay on their feet. It’s one of the best shows on the mountain. While enjoying our lunches, we can watch skiers and riders unsuccessfully challenge themselves. Most people make it at least half way down, while others sit down as soon as they come over the hump and see the drop.

It’s not short like Vertigo, where you can just slide to the bottom, taking all the snow with you. It’s not bumped up like Outer Limits, where you can trust the moguls to slow you down. It’s one solid piece of snow that will eat you alive if you aren’t prepared for it. And this weekend was prime time slide-for-life conditions.

We watched one guy lose his skis about five turns in and slide down the entire pitch. I’m not sure which was the more treacherous descent — the guys who slid all the way down or the skiers who now had to figure out how to carry his skis down Lower O. We watched another guy give up halfway through, sit down and slide the rest of the way gradually gaining speed until he hit terminal velocity. Definitely not the best choice.

Another skier tried to hide in the bushes on the skier’s right, but lost his footing and he, too, ended up sliding down the trail and got launched over a mogul, getting some good air. Although he probably didn’t appreciate the hard landing or the fact that he just kept sliding, we certainly did! Others tried to dive into the woods on skier’s left and that might have worked 10 years ago, but there’s a snowmaking pipe up there now and there’s really no way to exit unless you climb over the pipe.

There was a group huddled in a large section of bushes, trying to figure out their next move. It reminded me of sitting in the bowl at Tuckerman Ravine, watching first timers and experts taking a lunch break. I’ve actually done ascent training on Lower O with my mountaineering axe and crampons, but that wasn’t what was happening here. You could feel the fear twirling around them as they tried to pause for a break on the trail.

The best part? They kept coming. So many of them.

The trail had so little traction, that you would have needed extremely good balance on steeps or the sharpest edges to make it down safely. But because you cannot see over the roller from the top — and no one ever checks a trail before they ski it — the people kept coming over the roller and sliding down the trail. Only one in 10 skiers were making functional turns down the trail making it look if not easy, then at least doable.

Quintessential East Coast. Fast and challenging. In fact, I’m watching two skiers right now start their day on Ovation. The first seems to be having an okay time, while the other is swearing at his buddy under his breath. Should have waited an hour or two for the sun to hit it and the snow to soften. Soaked in the sun, Highline would have been the more delicious choice this morning.

I love Ovation and all the adventures that come with it. One of the singular best turns in my life was dropping into the headwall on a powder day — the snow went up to my armpits. And my mouth made that Ovation reaction, forming into an “O.” Classic!

Merisa Sherman is a long time Killington resident, KMS coach, local Realtor and member of the development review board.

When you have a view of Lower Ovation, you start to notice things. Like how so many people cannot manage to stay on their feet. It’s one of the best shows on the mountain, while enjoying our lunches, we can watch skiers and riders unsuccessfully challenge themselves.

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# Green Mountain Power alerts customers about sudden surge of scam calls

Scammers demand immediate payment, threaten shutoff

Green Mountain Power (GMP) began alerting customers Monday, Feb. 26, about a sudden surge of scam calls. Dozens of customers have reported a caller threatening immediate power shut off unless they pay up right away. This is a scam, and GMP is urging customers to be safe and hang up.

“We work with our customers, we’re here to help, and we would never threaten immediate shut off or demand payment over the phone. If someone is claiming to be GMP and demanding payment, just hang up. It is a scam,” said Liz Hart, manager of customer care for GMP.

**Tips to be safe when scammers call:**

- Do not provide payment or personal information
- Do not engage with the caller
- Do not call back the number that called you
- Call GMP Customer Service directly at 888-835-4672 to check the status of your account, report the call and any details about it, like the number it came from, the caller’s name, and what the caller said.
- Customers are also encouraged to report scam calls to the Vermont Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program at 800-649-2424 (in state) or 802-656-3183 or online at [ago.vermont.gov/cap](http://ago.vermont.gov/cap).

## Tiffany Saltis to leave the Downtown Rutland Partnership

Tiffany Saltis, executive director of the Downtown Rutland Partnership since 2022, is leaving the organization in March 2024. She will return to the greater Burlington area to join the team at Ethos Veterinary Health, according to news release Feb. 27.

Since 2022, Saltis has made significant contributions to our organization’s growth and success, including expanding Friday Night Live to Merchants Row as well as building new relationships with sponsors and community partners. Her leadership, vision, and dedication to our mission have been instrumental in driving our success and identifying further opportunities.

“I believe the organization is poised for continued success, and I’m confident that the Downtown Rutland Partnership will excel with its mission and fulfill the needs of merchants, residents, workers and visitors alike,” said Saltis. “While I’m departing the Partnership, we’ve made sure to collaboratively identify immediate goals for the organization, and the DRP has a great blueprint heading into the future with actionable items. It’s very exciting. I’ve witnessed firsthand a renewed sense of



Tiffany Saltis

Submitted

pride and identity among community members, and that energy will be put to good use. Thank you, all, for the privilege of serving as the executive director. I look forward to seeing the continued success of the organization in the years to come, and you bet I’ll be at the Friday Night Live events!”

In the meantime, the Board of Directors’ leadership team will ensure that operations continue to run smoothly with Hali Issente, DRP staff. DRP remains focused on delivering its mission and serving downtown stakeholders, the DRP stated in a news release.

“The Board of Directors would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Tiffany for her commitment and contributions to our organization. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors,” said Katy Munger, DRP board president. “We recognize that this news may come as a surprise, and we want to assure you that the Downtown Rutland Partnership remains committed to serving our downtown stakeholders and delivering on our mission.”

For more information, visit: [downtownrutland.com](http://downtownrutland.com).

← **TOS:** .....  
from page 38

likely to eat white oak acorns when they find them and bury those from the black oak group, whose tannins keep them well preserved. Squirrels hoard most of the undamaged black oak acorns they find, losing about 70 percent of them in the process. Those lost acorns often germinate, helping to propagate the next generation of oak trees.

White-tailed deer are among the top acorn consumers, with acorns comprising up to 75 of their late fall and early winter diet. One deer may eat 300 acorns per day. In a big mast year (every two to five years), deer weigh more and are more likely to produce twin fawns. Birds such as woodpeckers, blue jays, and many species of ducks also consume acorns. Ducks swallow them whole, while smaller birds peck them apart — getting the value of the acorn as well as whatever lives inside it. And acorns are a favorite food of wild turkeys.

“Turkeys use their long toes and bills to scratch through leaf litter on the forest floor and peck acorns from the ground,” said Allison Keating, turkey project leader with New Hampshire Fish and Game. “They can temporarily

store food in their crop [a muscular pouch near the throat] before it goes into the gizzard [part of the stomach], where it is ground up for digestion. Acorns not only help turkeys survive; they help them to be in better physical condition when breeding season begins — which leads to more successful breeding productivity.”

There’s an old saying that “mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow.” However, only about one in 10,000 acorns has the optimal conditions to become a mature tree. A northern red oak can produce 5,000 to 10,000 acorns in a season, up to 10 million over its lifetime. But weather, insects, and hungry animals consume the majority of these before they can germinate. Considering the odds, I’m thankful for my mature trees — even if I’m not nuts about being hit on the head by falling acorns.

Laurie D. Morrissey is a writer who lives in Hopkinton, New Hampshire. The illustration is by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. 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](http://nhcf.org).



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**THE MOUNTAIN TIMES**

# Maiden voyage to Playa del Carmen and a compelling invitation to Tijuana, Baja Norte

*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.*

Approaching Thanksgiving of 2020, when I was a month out from retirement, after 45 years of working in the arts, I came home from a day's work at The Paramount, to find my wonderful partner, Maureen McKenna Padula, with a mischievous look on her face, a look of surprised delight and a hint of conspiracy. She was wagging a copy of International Living at me.

"OK, I give up," I said. "That look seems to mean something sneaky is lurking?"

"Well [deep breath]...we are going to Mexico!" she said.

"What?" Are you nuts?!!! Mexico is a Covid hotspot!" I exclaimed.

"No, wait...listen... I have been doing research and guess what, Mexico is one of the rare places that is open and also, no one is there," she reasoned. "Hotel prices are dirt cheap, and we can easily find outdoor dining where we can socially distance. There is a national mandate on wearing masks and we will be just fine. In addition, the Caribbean Sea is 80 degrees and the median January temperature hovers in the 80-85 range. Need I remind you that the Vermont January temperature is projected to be below freezing — all month!"

Yep! The idea sure was growing on me rapidly. We were eager for more details — beyond the compelling feature in international living — about a place called Playa del Carmen in the area in northeast Mexico known as the Riviera Maya.

## A bit of context

The Riviera Maya has left its mark on the map as a tourist region, as it has a number of Mayan ruins sites, *cenotes* (deep natural wells or sinkholes, that expose groundwater underneath — there are 10,000 *cenotes* in the Yucatan Peninsula), beaches, fishing, diving, restaurants, hotels and nighttime entertainment that offer something for all types of travelers. The hotels, all-inclusive resorts, or AirBnB/Vrbo rentals in the thick of things make this area easily accessible and vibrant with its perfect tropical climate.

Playa del Carmen is known as the heart of the Riviera Maya and is home to a famous pedestrian street, Fifth Avenue, where most of the restaurants are located. There are also many superb establishments off the path, more moderately priced. Parallel (and one block) to the beach on La Quinta ("The Fifth" as the locals call it) features shopping centers, souvenir shops, art galleries, nightclubs, international brand stores and outdoor performance art. This is simply the best people-watching location you can find! It is thought that on any given day, at any given time, there will be 4,000-5,000 people walking, eating and exploring the 4-mile stretch of The Fifth. To us, only The High Line in New York City is comparable as a long, urban pedestrian path.

The nightly sport in Playa for a majority of travelers, is a quick trip to The Fifth, for an outdoor cocktail, a brisk after-dinner walk, or to just plunk down on a bench to people-watch.

Just 75 years ago the entire coastal area was a dense jungle, populated by numerous indigenous tribes, active pirates, and only a handful of small trading ports along the 120 kilometer (75 miles) coastline. A book, published in the mid-50s, "The Lost World of Quintana Roo," (the governing state of the Riviera Maya), by Michel Peissel is worth a read. The book chronicles Peissel leaving his Wall Street activities (at the ripe age of 21) to walk and explore — sometimes

at the literal tip of a spear — the coastal Mexican jungles of Quintana Roo well before Cancun, Playa and Tulum became the tourist meccas of today.

## The trip gains traction

After an arduous search of websites, AirBnB, and Verbo, we settled on a small boutique hotel, Casa de Las Flores (The House of Flowers) located in the center of Playa, four blocks from the beach. Covid had driven the price down to \$27 per night! Everything moved quickly and before we knew it, we are on our way to new adventures.

It is relatively simple to travel to this area. While there are no direct flights from the nearby airports (Burlington or Albany) the time from Rutland to Cancun, with one connection, took us only about 7 hours total. Local transportation from Cancun to Playa is either by taxi (\$75 with a \$10 tip) or the national commercial bus line ADO at \$12 one way.

One of the great pleasures of this journey is to walk out of the Cancun Airport and to walk into barometric pressure and 80+ degrees and hop onto the bus, knowing that aromatic climate will be with you for the duration of your stay. The Caribbean breezes are intoxicating, and the sky is a vivid blue. The sea is the color of turquoise jewelry.

We opted for the ADO bus line, modern, clean and efficient and 40 minutes later, we disembarked and made our way, five blocks on foot to our hotel.

Casa de Las Flores is a great little find, immaculate, painted in vivid colors (navy blue, sky blue and ochre), and features a large painting of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo holding watchful guard over the pool. She, seemingly, is everywhere in Playa, on shoes and clothing, murals and restaurant walls, including a swell little Frida Kahlo museum, beautifully curated and containing both stories and reproductions of some of her works (more on this in the next column in this series, episode 4). The hotel is spartan and perfectly pleasing; a good king-sized bed, and a lovely bathroom — with plentiful hot water —

at \$27 per night it's a deal of a lifetime!

The central courtyard has retained a good deal of the jungle (a signature Playa construction approach) with gigantic trees reaching 50 feet to the sky between the two two-story wings of the hotel. The full effect is of an establishment that might have hosted Ernest Hemingway or Tennessee Williams. We were perfectly happy there.

In the first week, we got to the pristine beaches every day, savored the 80-degree water, walk the full 50-block length of Fifth Avenue, languished by the pool and talked to American, Canadian and European ex-pats at various watering holes, learning key ingredients of "living in Playa."

We savored many of the area's most popular restaurants, featuring not only the great Mexican cuisine, but also the signature food of many nations. The average dinner price for two runs about \$50-\$60 including wine and a healthy tip. Fifth Avenue eateries consistently use U.S. dollars when listing prices, but we heartily recommend doing your homework and stretching out beyond the famous tourist avenue. Be the food Thai, Greek, Italian, French, Jamaican, or, of course, Mexican cuisine, which ventures well beyond tacos, tortas, burritos and quesadillas...you can find it here. Local dishes specialize in exotic baked fish in glorious sauces — Alambre and Veracruzana to name two of the most popular. Oh, and there is a huge food-truck culture here and one can eat for 20% of the cost of the dine-in restaurants, and have plenty of food (tacos, burritos, tortas, et al reign supreme). Plastic chairs surround the trucks and are packed with locals and tourists alike. Rule of thumb: if the trucks or restaurants are full it is safe to assume that they are good!

## A lifetime chance encounter

Toward the end of our stay at Casa de Las Flores, on a balmy afternoon, I was sitting on the balcony outside of our room, facing the courtyard, when a young man, half-in and half-out of a wetsuit made his way down the walkway across from our room, carrying the long swim fins — 4 feet in length. I called out six words that led to a lifetime friendship:

Tales from Riviera Maya → 45



Tales:  
Riviera Maya  
By Bruce Bouchard



By Bruce Bouchard

*Casa de Las Flores offered a comfortable residence for \$29 per night on our first venture to Riviera Maya. We were hooked!*

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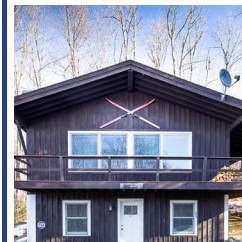
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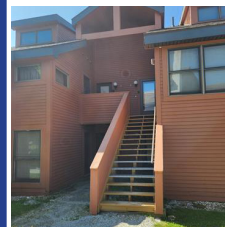
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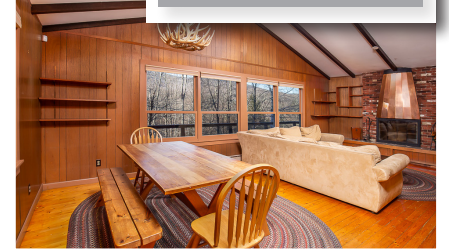
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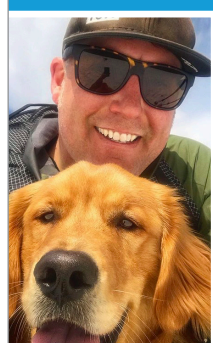
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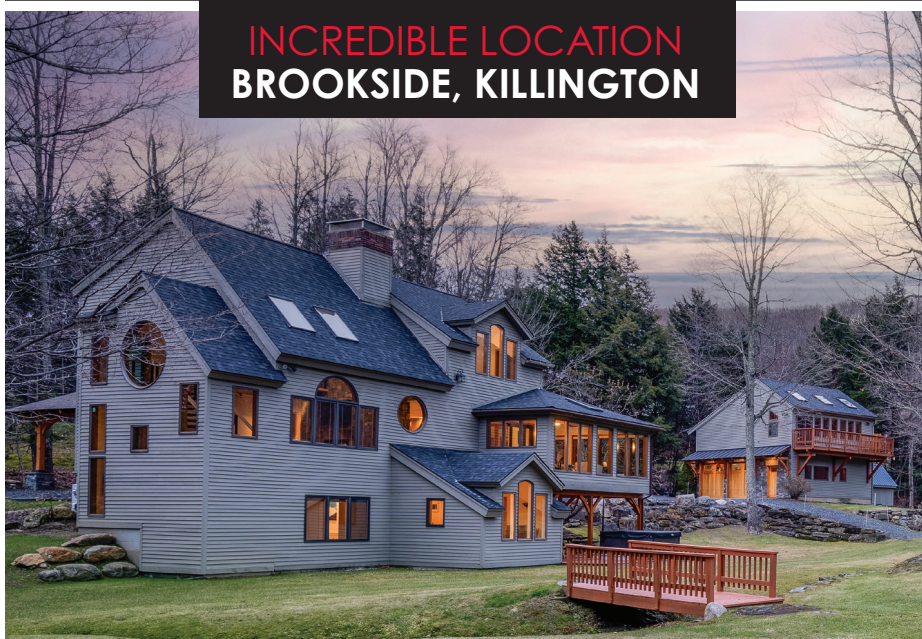
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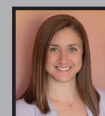
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← **Tales from Riviera Maya:**  
from page 42

“What’s up with the swim fins?”

Luis Robles, 26, answered: “I will come over and tell you!”

We spend three hours talking and learned that he hails from Tijuana, in Baja Norte [just south over the border of San Diego] and that he works in a 100-year import/export family business. He is mature, charming, and urbane well beyond his years.

I enquired about his part of the endeavor, and he responded, “I run the tire division, I buy them and get them shipped from China to Ensenada [40 miles south of TJ] and sell them all over Mexico.”

We also learn that not only is he a hard-core diver, but he has come to Playa on this trip to compete in a deep free-diving competition, which he had just, that very day, taken the top prize! He claimed to be able to hold his breath for 6 minutes!

We dined with Luis that evening and learn much more about his remarkable four-generation family at the very top of a mountain on the southern border of Tijuana. During the conversation, he clarified that the import/export part of his life is an avocation. “But Luis, if that is so, what is your vocation?”

“I am, along with my parents, a psychotropic healer” (Mexico is well ahead of the U.S. in the application of psilocybin and root therapy for therapeutic recovery treatment.

Full stop! Having just read Michael Pollan’s seminal book “How to change your mind: What the new science of psychedelics teaches us about consciousness, dying, addiction, and transcendence,” I was immediately intrigued.

Luis offered a life-changing opportunity. “My family is in the process of building a center, dedicated to human awareness and healing in Tecate [50 miles east of TJ] on the border of the U.S.]. We regularly host small and large groups for psychedelic treatments/ceremonies. I would very much like you both to come.”

He emphasized that the “treatments” have nothing to do with raves or partying, that as leaders in the burgeoning movement of recovery and evolution they curate ceremonies carefully, guiding participants to breakthroughs and discoveries large and small, challenging and rewarding.

We stayed in close touch over the ensuing months, and during one call, he said, “My family would like to offer an invitation to you and Maureen to come to TJ, stay with us and then venture to the Center.”

We happily and enthusiastically accepted Luis’ kind offer and in the following year we took a journey to Baja Norte and experienced genteel hospitality at the hands of his lovely parents, Tito and Eneeth. From their verandah at the top of



By Bruce Bouchard

*Bajaaya, aka the Center, offered a mountaintop retreat where we met our newly found friend Luis Robles for a “treatment.”*

the mountain, we looked out at the skyline of San Diego and could see planes coming in to land at the San Diego airport. At night the harsh lights of the most heavily traveled border in America delineate “The Crossing.”

The next day we ventured to the high desert (3,500 feet) outside of Tecate, to the Center, known as Bajaaya, a 150 square foot room with 30-foot ceilings and wrap-around verandas. On a clear night, from this remote location, in the hours before dawn, prone on a table on the verandah of the Center, one can see hundreds and thousands of stars...while not looking up at the sky, but rather, OUT at the universe — a key reveal...but then, the full reporting of that experience is a story for another day.

The rest of our time in Playa raced by like a high-speed Acela and we prepared to return to the cold Northeast. But Playa has hooked us. Its heart-centered ethos of “family as the center of life” is inspiring. One regularly sees on the *avenidas y calles*, husbands loving wives, and older children loving and caring for younger siblings. The country’s motto seemed to be “No Problemo” and “No Worries.” It was most appealing: gentle, polite and respectful.

The thing we took away from our first visit is that these humble and gracious people are happy with their lives, they live simply, the majority are devout, and what they do have... is enough. We planned to return each year for a minimum of three months.



By Bruce Bouchard

*Frida stood guard overlooking the pool at Casa de Las Flores.*

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# RRMC announces 2023 Physicians and Advanced Practice Providers of the Year

RUTLAND – Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) on Monday, Feb. 26, announced the recipients of the 2023 Rutland Regional Medical Center and Community Physician and Advanced Practice Provider of the Year awards.

To be nominated for an award, individuals must meet the following criteria: Demonstrate dignity and respect toward patients and staff; exhibit excellence in clinical care; and serve as a role model professionally and personally within the health care system and community.

These awardees were selected from more than 30 nominees, representing a diverse group of exceptional individuals who represent and reflect the quality of the medical staff. Awards are given to two physicians and two advanced practice providers representing RRMC and the Rutland area community.

“The purpose of these awards is to recognize physicians and advanced practice providers whose contributions to our community, patients, and staff represent the highest ideals in health care,” said Dr. Philip Lapp, vice president of medical affairs at RRMC. “It is truly an honor for these providers to be recognized by their colleagues and staff.”

These annual awards were created in memory of Dr. Emelie Munson Perkins, who served the Rutland community as a physician, employee, and volunteer.



### Physician of the Year: Zita Ficko, MD, Marble Valley Urology

Dr. Ficko joined RRMC in 2020 as a urologist physician. She received her bachelor’s degree in economics and molecular and cell biology at Yale University and a master’s in international business from University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia. Her medical degree is from Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. She completed her internship in general surgery and residency in urology at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. Dr. Ficko is board certified in urology by the American Board of Urology.

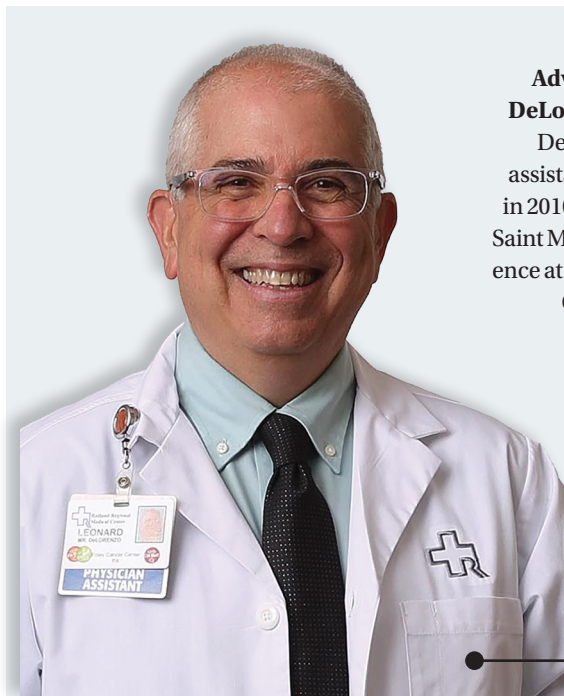
Dr. Ficko was recognized by her peers as a passionate and collegial physician who is a master in her field, submissions highlighted her clinical humanity, competence, and cooperation.



### Primary Care Physician of the Year: Carl Beckler, MD, Community Health

Dr. Beckler is a family medicine physician at Community Health’s Mettowee Family Clinic. He joined RRMC in 1990 and is a member of the RRMC affiliate staff. He received a medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals and completed his family medicine residency at Lancaster General Hospital. He is board certified with the American Board of Family Medicine.

When nominated, Dr. Beckler was recognized for going above and beyond for his patients, and always making himself open and accessible for consultation. His mentorship, counsel, and encouragement were attributed to the growth of the providers in his practice.



### Advanced Practice Provider of the Year: Leonard DeLorenzo III, PA-C, Foley Cancer Center

DeLorenzo is an oncology/hematology physician assistant at the Foley Cancer Center. He joined RRMC in 2010. He received his bachelor’s in science from Saint Michael’s College and a bachelor’s in health science at Duke University. He is certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

Leonard DeLorenzo was nominated for his professionalism, integrity and work ethic and he is seen as an astute clinician and a shining star among his peers. DeLorenzo, who sits on the ethics committee and pharmacy and therapeutics committees of the medical staff, is appreciated for his intuition, calm demeanor, and gentle manner.



### Advanced Practice Provider of the Year: Robin Myers, DNP, Community Health

Robin Myers is a family nurse practitioner, and medical director of Community Health Brandon. She is also a member of the RRMC affiliate staff. Myers received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Vermont, a master’s in adult nurse practitioner from Russell Sage College, and a doctorate in nurse practice from UMass Amherst. She is dually board certified through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) in family and adult medicine.

She started her healthcare career at Porter Medical Center as a unit clerk and later earned her degree as a registered nurse. She worked in various roles at RRMC including in the ICU, case management, and as a certified diabetes nurse educator for many years. She joined Community Health in 2004.

Myers was nominated for her collaboration, compassion, and the leadership skills she shows in relation to her patients.



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