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Vol. 17, No. 3 ~ P.O. Box 245, Cabot, Vermont 05647 ~ March 2024

by Ruby Baker



Carlie Beliveau

The Bakers' ultimate goal is to purchase a building in Cabot village to house the restaurant downstairs and lodging upstairs. Opening an inn has been a lifelong aspiration for the couple.



To find out more about investment opportunities and stay up to date on events, please contact info@stagthis.tle.com.

by CEO David Lynn

We extend our deepest gratitude to our impacted team members for their service. Behind each position is a person, a colleague, a friend with a life outside of work. We recognize and appreciate the significant contributions they have made to our organization, our farmers, and our brands.



As a cooperative, we are optimistic about where we're headed. Consumers are eating more cheese and yogurt than ever before, and specifically more Cabot products. We are committed to continuing that momentum in 2024.

by Gary Gulka

(See 'Flood Resiliency', page 5)

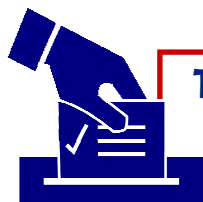
by Grant (Chip) Taylor



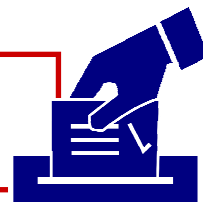
Back in 1998, a ham radio friend from the Boston area told me that he and his wife had rented a villa for a week on the island of Curacao, directly under the path of a total solar eclipse and that

there was a spare bedroom. Did I want it for a few days for \$50 a night? You bet. And that was when I first learned how serious eclipse chasers were: Preparing to change planes in Miami for the flight to Curacao, just one day before the eclipse, it was announced that the flight was overbooked. Did anyone want to take a chance on a late flight, possibly the next day and receive \$100? There were no takers. The offer went up and up - \$400, \$700, and finally at \$1,000 someone decided to risk a later flight or even *(See Eclipse Chasing, page 5)*

Monday, March 4, 2024, 6:30 p.m., at the Cabot School Performing Arts Center



**Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 10:00 a.m.,
At the Willey Building**



**Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.,
Town Clerk's office in Willey Building**



Selectboard: *Page 6*
Business Directory: *Page 15*

Legislative Update: The Future of Act 250

by Anne Watson
Washington District Senator



One of the biggest bills we will work on this session is a significant and (I think) very exciting overhaul of Act 250. The Senate Natural Resources and Energy version of this is S.308. But before I get into it, here's a little

background. For a primer on Act 250 (Vermont's signature land-use planning law), for the history of its origins, and for an overview of its current problems, I highly recommend VPR's Brave Little State podcast on Act 250.

What do I think about Act 250? I'm grateful for the environmental backstop that it provided to Vermont, especially for the towns that didn't and don't have zoning regulations, but I also believe Act 250 no longer serves Vermonters as well as it once did. In the last 50 years, many towns have adopted zoning regulations that duplicate the criteria for Act 250 and it's clear that Act 250 has:

1. Prevented good development in our downtowns and village centers,
2. Not prevented sprawl, and

3. Not protected significant ecological sites.

Here's the good news: Within the last few months of 2023 there were three studies all having to do with Act 250 (1. Regional Future Land Use, 2. State Designation 2050, and 3. Natural Resource Board's Necessary Changes to Act 250 aka "Act 250 Modernization"), which **astonishingly, across a broad spectrum of stakeholders, had a high degree of alignment of their suggestions for how to modernize Act 250**. Recommended by both environmental advocates and housing advocates, this set of consensus suggestions represents the package of changes that are currently represented in S.308. In testimony on this, it was delightfully refreshing to hear economic development champions call for better regulation to prevent forest fragmentation and defending Vermont's pristine ecological sites, and then to hear from environmental advocates on the need for more housing in our already-developed downtowns. I hope this description conveys how magical and significant this consensus is. The image below, from Charlie Baker's testimony (he's the Executive Director of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) is a visual representation of the alignment of these reports.



The current paradigm of Act 250 is **"threshold based"**. If you build too much or too fast, it triggers regulation. The new paradigm embodied in all three of these reports is a shift to **"location based"** regulation. There are some places where we want to encourage development, like in our downtowns and village centers, which are already well-regulated. And there are some places that are so ecologically sensitive or significant that ANY development should be regulated there, even if it's just one unit of housing.

The language that we have been using in committee to distinguish between different types of places comes from the

"Necessary Changes to Act 250" report (aka the NRB report), which uses a tier system:

Tier 1a: These are downtowns or previously-developed areas, with access to water and sewer, in cities and towns which have such robust zoning that Act 250 is duplicative. These are places that will likely either be exempt from Act 250, or they may locally administer the Act 250 process, or something similar.

Tier 1b: Village centers or towns which may not have access to both water and sewer, and whose zoning may not be quite as robust as checking all of the boxes of Act 250, but maybe they check some of the boxes. And so these areas

would get some level of either exemption or self-administration of Act 250 that corresponds to the zoning they do have or some other loosening of the regulations.

Tier 2: Rural areas that are not Tier 3. Act 250 would continue to apply here potentially with an additional provision called the "road rule" that would help prevent forest fragmentation.

Tier 3: I'll quote the bill as it currently stands: "These lands have significant ecological value, and require special protection due to their uniqueness, fragility, or ecological importance. They may include protected lands, areas with specific features like steep slopes or endan-

gered species, wetlands, flood hazard areas, and shoreline protection areas and are intended to remain largely undeveloped for the benefit of future generations."

To be fair, we've got a long way to go before any of this makes it to the floor for a vote, but I wanted you to have at least the basics of the kind of shifts in Act 250 that may be coming. There's reason to be hopeful about land use planning in Vermont, and I'm looking forward to working further on these historic Act 250 reforms. Please feel free to get in touch if you have any thoughts, ideas, concerns, or questions about anything I've mentioned here.

We Need To Figure This Out

by
Representative Scott Beck,
Caledonia-Essex
Representative R. Scott Campbell,
Caledonia Essex
Representative Bobby Farlice-Rubio,
Caledonia-1
Representative Dennis LaBounty,
Caledonia-3
Representative Henry Pearl,
Caledonia-Washington
Representative Terri Lynn Williams,
Essex-Caledonia

Significant statewide and local attention has recently been focused on this year's school district budgets, anticipated property tax rates, and a potential mid-course change to Vermont's education funding formula. This scenario is incredibly difficult for our local school districts and school boards to navigate. We ask that you communicate with them and intentionally listen. And please be patient, they are doing their best to make decisions in the best interest of communities, taxpayers, students, and schools amid a shifting budget landscape.

Much of the school funding instability this year is related to the backside of the pandemic. Inflation during 2022 and 2023 is catching up to school districts in a myriad of ways. Health insurance costs, collective bargaining agreements, and capital construction and repair costs have placed out-sized stress on local budgets. One-time pandemic ESSER funds used to pay for employees deemed critical to helping students recover from learning loss and health issues are expiring. On December 1, the Agency of Education projected that school districts would increase their education spending next school year by \$205M. By the end of January, the projected increase had ballooned to \$243.4M. An increase of this magnitude would cause the average education property tax bill to increase by 20%.

A property tax rate cap mechanism incorporated into Act 127 has not worked as intended and caused a portion of the

spending increase. This 5% rate cap was expected to be used by a handful of districts negatively affected by Act 127 pupil weighting changes. Due to inflationary pressures mentioned previously, and others, every school district budget warned to voters is now over the 5% cap.

H.850, a bill that passed the House on Wednesday [February 17] and expected to become law within two weeks would eliminate the 5% cap and instead direct targeted rate discounts only to districts negatively affected by Act 127 weighting changes. H.850 has the potential to decrease education spending and property tax increases, but only if districts react by reducing their education spending.

If proposed budgets aren't reduced and voters approve these budgets, the average education property tax bill will increase by 20%. A 20% tax bill increase is too much for too many. Yet, we need to ensure our children receive a high-quality education. A balancing act and divide that normally feels reachable with a little flexibility and sharpening of pencils feels as wide as the Grand Canyon this year. Our school boards take the education of Vermont children seriously, but property taxpayers cannot be considered an infinite resource.

It is possible that the Legislature could propose revenues to help with this situation, but this is a band-aid at best and there is not a consensus on where these revenues would come from. The General Fund is projected to grow at 3.5% this year and the Transportation Fund is close to flat, which makes it even more difficult to raise new revenue and send it to the Education Fund.

This year's situation is extraordinarily difficult. But it is also an opportunity for the Legislature, Administration, and Agency of Education to take a hard look at education spending and craft long-term solutions that strike an appropriate balance among education spending, taxpayer capacity, and educational outcomes. Really difficult decisions will have (see *'Figure This Out'*, page 8)

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How Will You Vote on March 5th?

Should you vote for the proposed FY25 School Budget of \$4,490,319, a 24% increase over last year?

NO

"People need to understand that we don't have a lot to cut in the budget. If the budget fails by a large margin, do people want a school that is gutted? Do people want a school that has no art and no music?" - School Board Chair

"The (designating) option is here." The CCSU Supervisory Union is recommending the most cost-effective choice is to **close grades 7-12** and send those students to Twinfield.

We will **not** have board representation at Twinfield, and therefore no control over our 7th-12th graders' education. And there is no guarantee the negotiated lower tuition rate there would stay low.

YES

"We plan to hold a series of facilitated meetings this spring and summer so that we as a community can discuss what we want going forward for the future of education in Cabot that can be fiscally responsible." - School Board Chair

Should you vote to close grades 9-12 and tuition those students to schools of their choice while retaining grades pre-K thru 8th?

YES

Leveling the playing field so all students have access to programs that most could never access before, providing equity for all students

More choices = ability to choose the safest schools

Better student performance and outcomes

Keep our options open as the town and its students are not locked into any one school model

Higher satisfaction rates for students and parents

Higher graduation rates

Refocus administration attention on improving pre-K-8th grades

Empowered students who have more say in the direction of their dreams

Hundreds of more programs, sports, and clubs to choose from, significantly increasing chances of success

NO

Helps increase generational wealth and break the poverty cycle

Increased diversity of experiences

What Does Sustainable Mean?

"I really want to discourage the board from thinking of this as a one year aberration and think of a sustainability plan over time." - Cabot School Principal

Sustainable means coming to terms with the fact that the school is in financial trouble and that closure is on the horizon. The proposed budget is for a bare bones education at the Cabot School. As school budgets continues to rise, resources are shrinking, and so many school services are being cut, how can we honestly say that we are meeting the changing needs of Cabot's adolescents?

School choice is not only for families whose children 'aspire to' competitive universities or want careers outside of Cabot. It is to give all families more options and the choice of a school best suited to their individual needs. With essentially the same budget,

School Choice gives students **FREEDOM** and **OPTIONS**!

Paid for by Cabot Citizens for School Choice, PO Box 175, Cabot, VT 05647



COMMUNITY COMMENTARY

The views, opinions and information expressed in the Community Commentary, are solely those of the writer and not necessarily those of this newspaper or its affiliates.

School Choice

Dear Editor:

As the brilliant economist Thomas Sowell says, "There are no solutions. There are only trade-offs." Which trade-offs will you choose when it comes to education for Cabot's students?

- Trying the high school choice model OR staying with the current, deteriorating school model?
- Schools that compete (thus constantly improve) for students OR stay with non-competitive, non-improving monopoly?
- Handfuls of options for each child to find where they thrive best in education OR a tiny handful of options with less chance of success?
- Flexible and adaptable choice model OR archaic, cemented, Prussian model?
- Best-fit education for every Cabot child OR one-size-fits-everyone in Cabot?
- Determining quality education for oneself OR being told what quality is?
- Each student (and family) selects their own educational pathway OR continue to allow an unaccountable, unaffected third party to choose for them?

Cabot School

Letter to the Editor:

There has been a lot of community conversation related to the quality of education provided at Cabot School. As newcomers to town, we would like to offer our perspective. Our family moved to Cabot just before the school year began in late August. We came from a top-rated school district in Massachusetts with more than 5,800 students served by five elementary, two middle, and one high school. With a town-wide population of approximately 40,000 people, the school system was diverse and had a substantial tax base to support academic programming, special education, and regular capital improvements to buildings – including construction of two brand new schools in the last 15 years.

Moving from a school with hundreds (elementary) or thousands (high school) of students to a school with a total Pre-K to 12 population of less than 200 students was a culture shock to say the least. In the few short months since enrolling our children in Cabot School we have seen them flourish. Cabot's hands-on learning approach, small class sizes, opportunities for enrichment through project-based learning, educational and experiential field trips, as well as its dedication to respect, responsibility, kindness, and engagement create an environment where individual learning styles are embraced, and students receive the support they need to thrive.

Our daughter previously attended a large elementary school with more than 700 students where she was just a "face in the crowd." She would frequently come home from school and ask to be homeschooled. The experience at our large, well-funded, highly rated elementary school was overwhelming and meaningful engagement was hard to come by for many students. Our high schooler

- Empowered with choice, students and families hold schools accountable OR continue with unaccountable, flailing centralized education?
- Investing in each child's future through individualized education OR investing in one type of educational model?
- Effective educational model OR "efficient" educational model?
- More students engaged and invested in their education through exercising choice OR less students engaged and invested?
- Equal opportunity across zip codes OR opportunities limited by zip code?
- All students get educational equity OR continue with an inequitable system, where only the "haves" get all the options?
- Educational freedom OR educational limits?
- Fund students OR fund systems?

What's best for Cabot's students IS what's best for Cabot's future. Cabot's students are Cabot's future. Let's finally put them first in their own education!

Which Trade-offs Will You Choose?

By Sharon Kulsick

often lacked the motivation to attend his large school of nearly 2,000 students. Not only was the environment a mismatch for his needs, but the learning approach was incredibly prescriptive, and he failed to connect with the educational material in any substantive way.

Since moving to Cabot, our fourth grader has regularly expressed how happy she is to be at Cabot School. Because the class sizes are small, the teachers are able to engage with individual students in ways that best match their learning styles and needs. Individuality is recognized and celebrated – something that really resonates with our young daughter. Our high school son has told us repeatedly that he loves Cabot School, and he really hopes he's able to stay in Cabot through his senior year next year. When we describe the educational experiences available in Cabot to our friends in Massachusetts, they are always impressed and wish their own children had similar opportunities.

Cabot School's website says: "Cabot is built on core values of responsibility, engagement, kindness, and respect. We manifest these values through a project-based approach to learning that emphasizes authenticity, relationships, curiosity, creativity, and design." We have found this statement to be resoundingly true. The dedication of teachers, administration, support staff, and volunteers to this model help make Cabot School the valued institution it is today.

It is incredibly unfortunate that a small, vocal minority in town have decided to leverage a citizen's petition to seek substantial, harmful, costly changes to the current school structure by issuing a ballot initiative to implement school choice for grades 9 through 12. School choice already exists for Cabot students. Through Vermont's "Public High School Choice" program, Cabot has an allotted number of spots available for students to

attend the public high school of their choice. However, not all of the available slots have been used. That indicates the students currently attending Cabot High School are doing so because *it is their preferred school*. Voting to approve school choice and close the high school will take this option away from the many students already enrolled at Cabot High School, upend family schedules, leave parents and caregivers scrambling to find transportation, dissolve a school community that is vital to the long-term wellbeing of the larger Cabot community, and cost more than continuing to operate our own Pre-K to 12 school system.

You might ask "if there are remaining school choice spots still available, why would anyone need to place 'School Choice' on the ballot?" The standard Public High School Choice program allows students to select another public high school to attend. However, it does not allow students to select a *private* school. The individuals pushing this initiative have primarily compared Cabot School to St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute – two private schools. It seems these folks want Cabot taxpayers to foot the bill to send their students to private school. Many advocates for the school choice ballot measure currently homeschool their children. This means these students, who

evidently have an interest in private school, are not currently accounted for in the financial analysis provided by the Supervisory Union. If this ballot measure passes, you can bet we will have additional students enrolling in private schools that command some of the highest tuition rates in the state when all costs are factored in.

In addition to raising the overall cost of education for Cabot taxpayers, school choice as presented in the ballot initiative will result in a lack of local control over a substantial portion of our education budget. Closing our high school will not facilitate building a stronger elementary and middle school program as some have suggested. Outside tuition costs cannot be reduced. The only remaining cost cutting opportunities will be in the operating budget for the newly diminished Cabot School serving Pre-K through eighth grade. This means Pre-K to 8 programs will suffer each time cost cutting measures are implemented, eventually gutting educational opportunities for our youngest, most vulnerable learners.

We respectfully ask Cabot residents to vote NO on "School Choice" and vote YES to support Cabot School's annual budget at Town Meeting on March 5, 2024.

Sincerely,
Jackie and Melissa Pratt

Heart of our Community

Dear Editor:

The Heart of Our Town: The Invaluable Role of Our K-12 School in Cabot

In our rural Vermont community, our K-12 school is more than just a place of learning; it is the heartbeat of our town. Over the years, our community has stood firm in its commitment to this institution, voting four times to maintain its presence against the tide of merger and choice initiatives. This steadfast dedication speaks volumes about the intrinsic value we place on controlling our educational destiny and preserving the unique culture that binds us. For just over a decade now, Cabot School has met challenges with members in the community advancing a "choice" model initiative, in addition to the State's adoption of Act 46 attempting to force a merger on Cabot School to join with surrounding districts. Each time the arguments are the same, and each time the community recognizes that these movements would make our school more expensive for taxpayers with less control over our budgets and the curriculum of our students, and more, that the loss of the school would greatly affect the community.

The Value of Local Control in Education

At the core of our community's continued decision to keep the K-12 school within our town lies the desire for local control over education. This autonomy allows us to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of our students and community, ensuring that education is not just about meeting standard requirements, but about fostering a learning environment that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and community values. Our governance model, exemplified by our rejection of a merger under Act 46, underscores our community's resolve to oversee and shape the educational journey of our children, ensuring it aligns with our town culture and aspirations.

The local control that this community has treasured over time is put at risk when we place other communities in charge of our kids and our budget. This would be the result if we became a "choice" district. Under this model, high school students are permitted to attend any high school of their choosing. The caveat being that the tuition for that school is then paid for by Cabot School as the "sending district". In addition to the tuition, which we have no control over, we, the sending district taxpayers, would also be responsible for any special education costs associated with our students. Moreover, this part of the budget is locked – the school board cannot alter, negotiate, or change anything about that portion of the budget. Under a "choice" model, not only do we not have control over that spending, but our tax dollars also leave Cabot and get directed to surrounding towns.

The Economic Argument

Concerns about the cost of maintaining a small school often surface in discussions about educational infrastructure. Yet, our town's experience challenges the notion that bigger is always better or more economical. Before considerations like the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) are factored in, our school boasts one of the lowest costs in the region, a testament to the efficiency and effectiveness of our education system. (Within our Supervisory Union (SU), we have the second lowest pre-CLA rate, and it is important to note that the Choice districts in our SU are the highest with 8-12% higher pre-CLA rates than Cabot). This economic efficiency, combined with the unparalleled educational and social benefits, makes a compelling case for the value our K-12 school brings to our community.

While larger choice districts may be perceived as offering more options, they come at a considerable cost. Research indicates that small schools are more cost-effective and provide a better return on (see 'LTE - Heart', page 7)

OBITUARIES & MEMORIALS

Eloise Grace Batchelder Bartley



Eloise Grace Batchelder Bartley, 91, of Concord, NH, passed away quietly surrounded by her loving family on January 18, 2024, the anniversary of her mother's pass-

ing. Eloise was born in Cabot in July 1932, the oldest daughter of Raymond and Jessie Batchelder. Originally living in northern Vermont, she spent most of her childhood in the Springfield, VT, area.

More information is available at <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/eloise-batchelder-bartley-obituary?pid=206171692>.

Gregory Adam Gabrielson



Gregory (Gregg) Adam Gabrielson (37) of Wales, Wisconsin, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, February 16, at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center from complications of emergency cardiac surgery.

Gregg was the youngest son of Linda and Jeff Gabrielson of Cabot.

Gregg was born on July 15, 1986, in Providence, RI, and spent his youth in Rhode Island, Virginia, and Maine following his father's various U.S. Coast Guard assignments. He graduated from Cape Elizabeth High School in Maine. He studied fire science at Southern Maine Community College and Alan Hancock College (in California). He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Engineering and a Master of Science in Workplace Safety from Eastern Kentucky University. He was completing his doctorate in Organiza-

tional Psychology from Grand Canyon State University at the time of his passing.

Gregg was a volunteer junior firefighter in Cape Elizabeth through his teens, and later a wild fire firefighter with Cal Fire in California. He was most recently employed by Generac Corp. in Wisconsin as Senior Manager of Corporate Safety.

Gregg loved dogs - especially his two Basenjis. He enjoyed solving problems such as rebuilding an adopted Mini-Cooper. He could be counted on to help anyone in need - stopping to render first aid at many an accident site. His love of family and community was unsurpassed.

Gregg is survived by his wife, Zaneta Gabrielson; siblings, Jeremy Gabrielson and Erin Valentine; brother-in-law, Paul Valentine; sister-in-law, Sarah Gabrielson; niece, Willow Valentine; nephews, Neil and Ezra Gabrielson; many aunts, uncles, and cousins; and his parents, Jeff and Linda Gabrielson.

for a span of time also worked at the Lindstrom Family Farm in Cabot.

Aside from spending time with family, she also enjoyed reading, playing cards, working through puzzle books and crossword puzzles.

She was predeceased by her father, Allan Ross Davis on November 17, 2013; and by a brother-in-law, Wayne Bearce on September 8, 2023.

Beth's memory will be cherished by her fiancé, Greg Farnham of Marshfield, VT; her children, Mathew Coutu of Marshfield, VT, Dakota Coutu and fiancé Brooke Foster of North Concord, VT, Crystal Laferriere and husband Scott of Danville, VT, and Denver Lindstrom of Cabot, VT; her grandchildren, Taylor, Zayne, Kinsey, Jaxson, Dominic and Melanie; her mother Sandra Davis of St. Johnsbury, VT; her siblings, Scott Davis and Tammy of Barnet, VT, and Sherri Bearce of Monroe, NH; and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Those who wish may donate to any charity that benefits animals in Beth's memory. To offer the family online condolence, please visit www.rickerfh.com. Ricker Funeral Home & Cremation Care of Woodsville is assisting the family.

Cabot's recovery has been an intense sprint. Now we're heading into the long marathon of mitigation, trying to lessen the impact of future events.

We plan to have some informational meetings in the spring about flood resiliency and the specifics of the engineering study.

The Task Force is coordinated through the Conservation Committee, and members include: Dawn Andrews, Michele Braun (Friends of the Winooksi), Chris Duff, Thomas Dunbar, Karen Deasy, Peg Elmer Hough, RD Eno, Gary Gulka, Roland Payne, Jr., and Chris Tormey.

Deborah Lynn Martin Walsh



Deborah Lynn Martin Walsh, 63, of Marshfield, died unexpectedly at her residence in Marshfield on Friday, February 9, 2024. She was born June 12, 1960, in Hardwick, the daughter of the late Arnold Edward Martin, Sr. and Bonnie-Lou Mae (Ross) Martin. She attended Walden and Cabot public schools. As a young girl, her family moved to Skagway, Alaska where she continued her education at Skagway High School. She enjoyed flowers, music, concerts,

dancing, snowmachining, traveling, playing cards, watching fireworks, and time with her family. Survivors include her siblings and extended family. All services will be held later in the spring. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating in her memory to the Woodridge Nursing Home, 142 Woodridge Drive, Berlin, VT 05602, or to an animal shelter/sanctuary or the humane society. Debbie had several dogs during her life and loved them all dearly. Arrangements are in the care of Dian R. Holcomb of Northern Vermont Funeral Service, 60 Elm Street, Hardwick. Online condolences are welcomed at: northernvermontfuneralservice.com.

Black Chokeberry Just Might Be The Perfect Shrub

By Susan Socks of Garden Goddess Consulting and Gardening

Black chokeberry, *Aronia melanocarpa*, has it all. It's loaded with clusters of white flowers in the early spring. It has glossy green foliage that turns brilliant colors in the fall. It has edible fruit. It's not fussy about the soil where it's planted, even tolerating some road salt. It's native to our area. It supports pollinators. It's small-ish, usually between 3-6' tall and wide. It isn't invasive or pushy, and keeps its suckers pretty close to the main plant. It's rarely bothered by pests or diseases. While they are more productive when there are two or more of them near each other, they are self-fertile, so you can plant just one, and still get fruit. What a plant!

My favorite thing about *Aronia melanocarpa*, it's the fruit. They are black, plentiful, and grow in easy-to-pick clusters. They are dreadful raw (hence the name chokeberry), so you'll want to freeze or cook them before eating. Berries can be used for wine, juice, health tonics, sodas, jam, or baked goods. Historically, indigenous people included them in pemmican. The fruit is full of anthocyanins; natural dark coloring that is purported to help reduce the impact of diabetes, cancer, inflammation, obesity, and cardiovascular

disease. My favorite method for using black chokeberries is to cook them, strain the juice, and add the juice to applesauce. It turns the applesauce dark pink, and gives it a flavor close to cranberry sauce. Aronia juice in cider is also Delish!

The native habitat of *Aronia melanocarpa* includes wet thickets, moist high-elevation forests, rocky outcrops, and along the edges of ponds and lakes. It prefers 5-6 hours of sunshine a day, or more, for best flower and fruit production. You can let it sucker and slowly spread in naturalized areas, or prune suckers and old wood at ground level for a more manicured look in your garden. Wildlife will thank you; pollinators love the flowers, moth and butterfly species use the berries as a host plant, and birds and mammals eat the sturdy fruit in winter when all other fragile berries have vanished.

Plant a black chokeberry (or 3 or 4) this season. Spring or fall both work for planting. You can buy potted specimens from local nurseries, or order bare root stock from a mail-order nursery.

This garden article is brought to you by Susan Socks, aka the Garden Goddess. Stay tuned for upcoming articles on green lawn care, pruning, garden tools, edible landscapes, and more. For gardening help, visit www.SocksFamilyFarm.weebly.com or call 802.498.7785.

Eclipse Chasing

(continued from page 1)

miss the eclipse. Everyone on that flight were serious eclipse chasers. One man in said this would be his ninth total solar eclipse! We had perfect weather, an amazing experience and I even got in an extra day to do some scuba diving. I was hooked and ready to see another eclipse.

That chance came for the solar eclipse of 2027. A good friend, retired Air Force Colonel and astronomy fanatic living in Colorado Springs, invited me to become a member of his astronomy club. The club had managed to get several acres in Glendo Park, Wyoming, reserved for the club, directly under the center line of the eclipse, provided that they would give an astronomy presentation to others the night before the eclipse. This time I planned to drive so I could do some sight-seeing along the way, and to research a woman ancestor who had owned a silver mine in Colorado. Driving cross country, I started to notice those big highway electronic signs that normally warn of accidents or road work ahead now warning of "SOLAR ECLIPSE Aug 21". First in southern Illinois. And then more and more across Missouri, Kansas and eastern Colorado. Heading north to Wyoming from Colorado Springs well before sunup on eclipse day, the flashing highway signs

now proclaimed "HEAVY ECLIPSE TRAFFIC EXPECTED SAT-TUE" followed by "PLAN ACCORDINGLY". It was good that my friend's astronomy club had reserved camping space at Glendo State Park. The Park has been booked up for weeks and those without a reservation were being turned away.

So, perfect weather and another amazing eclipse. With astronomers in attendance, there were plenty of people to point out some stars and planets that appeared when the Sun was blacked out by the Moon. Several hours later I said my good-byes and then realized that the nearby Interstate was filled with cars, and there was a backup of vehicles from the Park to the Interstate. No problem, I thought. There was a two-lane road paralleling the Interstate, so I could hop on that, and head 15 miles to another small two-lane road that would take me back east through Nebraska and Iowa. Ha! Several thousand other people seeing the backlog on the Interstate had the same idea.

That 15-mile journey took almost four hours! And finding a motel that had a vacancy was quite a challenge.

If you plan to travel to see the April eclipse, be prepared for cloudy weather, crowded roads, and booked up lodging. And whether skies are clear or cloudy, think ahead to the NEXT solar eclipse in 2026 (Greenland, Iceland and Spain).

Flood Resiliency

(continued from page 1)

If we receive grant funding (about \$70,000, including a local match of 25%), we hope that the study can be completed this fall. This should allow us to apply for FEMA hazard mitigation implementation funds to start putting solutions in place. Some solutions may take a longer period to implement and require more detailed engineering design work. Others may be quicker to implement, such as debris management devices.

As Mike Hogan likes to characterize it,

Through The Cabot Chronicle, the CCA promotes their mission to enhance the quality of community life for those residing, doing business, and visiting Cabot, VT. One aspect of that mission is to empower Cabot residents to participate in the governance and management of our town.

The Chronicle is dedicating a staff writer to cover selectboard and other meetings, for the purpose of keeping community members informed about issues discussed at meetings they might not be able to attend. Most meetings are available via Zoom for those who would like to listen in person. Instructions for joining meetings virtually through Zoom are posted regularly on Front Porch Forum, or you can call the Town Clerk's office for details at 563-2279. Digital Recordings of selectboard meetings are available on the Town website, CabotVT.US by clicking on "Selectboard Meetings."

FEMA Mitigation Projects

by Frank Kampf, Staff Writer

At the Selectboard meeting on Feb 20, Sid Griggs was asked about any high-way updates, and he responded that they were getting ready for the fifth mud season, then segwayed to the FEMA mitigation projects being planned for later this year. These projects involve replacing all the temporary culverts and bridges with more permanent structures.

Tyler Billings, a consultant, spoke about a proposal for a number of sites, all FEMA related, which are outside the scope of what Sid and the highway crew can handle. He got started a couple weeks ago, and first looked at Blodgett Road.

Tyler described a step by step process, and gave a brief overview which included the design phase, checking hydroponics, land owner outreach, permitting, consulting archaeology and the army corps of engineers, as well as easements.

He said most towns pay about 10 to 15% of the cost, and working with FEMA can be very painful. Tyler explained the resultant structures usually work out to be a good deal, and are much more resilient than what was previously there. His baseline for design is the 100 year flood, and that he also runs the 200 and 500 year flood scenarios. After that, the projects are put out to bid.

Tyler went on to say there are a lot of steps, and he was hopeful that most of the construction will happen in the later half of the year. He did mention that the town might have to ask FEMA for an extension. He advised that they should not wait until just before the deadline, December 23, to request the extension.

Then the conversation turned to specifics about the different projects. Tyler discussed Jug Brook Road, along with

Blodgett Road. He said those culverts are probably the simplest and straight forward. They have preliminary hydraulics, and all the structures fall within a 20- to 23-foot span. Tyler said the size of a span is too big for a box culvert, but too small for a short bridge, so he might propose a hybrid structure with concrete abutments but an aluminum corrugated arch that gets back filled like a culvert.

Tyler then discussed Menard Road. He pointed out there is currently a temporary bridge in place, and the site is tricky because it is a dead end. He said there really isn't any place for a bypass. Tyler explained that he is thinking they could leave the bridge in place while they build a new culvert and back fill it almost to the underside of the bridge. Then they can take the bridge away, and back-fill it in a short amount of time, minimizing the period the road would be closed. They could do it in the middle of the night or coordinate it with the residents.

Then the discussion turned to Mack Mountain Road, and Tyler mentioned the town had done some preliminary work in the past. He said the previous recommendation of a box culvert would be the perfect solution. He said the pre-cast boxes go in quickly and the road would only be closed for roughly two weeks. They have looked at a place for a bypass and there is only one good spot, which isn't that great, but is doable. He said it would be on the upstream side, and it would be expensive and slow.

R.D. Eno asked about timelines and Tyler talked through an approximate length of each step. The board asked Tyler about a few more details on each of the projects, and the pros and cons. Karen asked if the town could just keep the temporary bridge on Menard Road, and Tyler responded that the town could not keep it forever.

Then, after the state completed its review, further progress on the report could commence. Roger mentioned the state has had the report for 197 days, and had confirmed receipt of the report on October 4, 2023. He added that it has been a long time.

The board returned to the discussion at the February 20 meeting. Roger was again in attendance via Zoom. Mike started the discussion by explaining that Fred has been going down to the plant and working with Roger. Mike reminded everyone that the system is over 25 years old.

He then mentioned that the current repair list in the preliminary report to-

taled \$225,000. Mike thought the board should consider adding a wastewater plant operator into next year's budget. He believes the plant needs someone present on a regular basis. He felt it wouldn't be a big expense, maybe 30 hours a week. He added the plant was a big capital item, and it needs a lot of TLC.

Fred Ducharme said it is a difficult system to keep running on high, which is where it should be. Fred added that it's a maintenance nightmare, and there are no bypasses, so everything had to be shut down to make repairs. He also said much of the system is beyond its expected life.

Henry Pearl Legislative Discussion

by Frank Kampf, Staff Writer

Cabot's State Representative, Henry Pearl, had a town hall type meeting in each of the communities he represents, and the legislative discussion he held at Cabot was on January 26. There were between 10 and 20 people present at the meeting and Henry spoke about a number of things, addressed some issues, and answered several questions.

Henry started out by telling everyone that he was in his second term as our representative, and he currently sits on the House Agriculture (Ag) Committee. He stated that he is trying to be better at getting out into the community, to listen and hear about what concerns people. He noted that he is only one of 222 members in the State House of Representatives, and there is only so much he can do. He mentioned that every representative has their priorities.

Henry went on to talk about how education is the hottest topic at the moment, and he said it is very complex. He pointed out that members of the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Education Committee know more about the topic, neither of which he is a member. He added that the legislature is trying to do their best, but that things don't always work out as they expected.

After some discussion of the current issues surrounding education funding, which included pupil weighting and the common level of appraisal (CLA), Henry moved onto agriculture and forestry. He said that is legislation he works on all the time. He said that food security is also under the purview of the Ag committee. He wanted everyone to know that 90% of the work in the legislature happens in committees, and the legislators trust each other to do their best in committee.

R.D. Eno returned the conversation to education, and said that any time anyone tinkers with a complex system, it can have unintended results. He went on to say that he thought the legislature should consider changing to an income-based tax to fund education. Henry agreed, and added that there is pushback in the legislature on that idea.

Elizabeth Vitale also spoke about education, and wanted to get Henry's input on Act 127 and all the various legislation pieces in the last decade. She talked about how the town votes down budgets and there was hope Act 127 would change things. She said when the budget is voted down, things have to get cut.

Henry spoke to some bills that were circulating in the legislature, and said he really didn't have an agenda. He said he can see both sides. He speculated that if Cabot no longer had a high school, then under school choice, kids could go to the Academy. He said that would be great for some kids. He added that other kids would go to other public schools. He said that when kids go to a private school, the public schools do not get the public money. Henry mentioned that is why one of the new bills is looking to limit school choice so public dollars stay in the public school system. He concluded by saying there are always winners and losers.

After more discussion regarding possible changes in the legislature regarding education finance, R.D. changed the discussion to flood relief, and asked about an omnibus bill. Henry said he was more focused on the budget, and that there was 15 million dollars in there for immediate flood relief.

R.D. said one of the biggest problems towns are facing is that even though FEMA is going to pay by reimbursement, towns still have to borrow the money, and they have no idea when FEMA may cover the expenses. R.D. added that FEMA does not pay for the interest on the loans.

Skip Bothfeld asked about the Current Use program, and Henry said the legislature was going to leave it alone for right now. He said a lot of people from out of state are buying land and getting a lease with a farmer to get a big tax break, and that wasn't the intention of the program. He said there is worry that because the program is complex, something might break, so they are leaving it alone.

(see 'Henry Pearl', page 8)

Water and Wastewater

by Frank Kampf, Staff Writer

The town has been doing inspections and repairs on the village water and wastewater systems. The most recent publicized event was when a flow test was being performed and a valve failed, causing a possible contamination of the water system. At the February 6 meeting of the board, the discussion regarding the water and wastewater system began with this recent episode.

Betty Ritter explained they needed to have two consecutive samples free of bacteria before the town could lift the boil water notice. She added they were just waiting on the results of the sample taken that morning. R.D. Eno said he still wasn't clear regarding what happened to cause the contamination.

Roger of H2O Innovations explained what happened: They were doing a flow test on a hydrant, and during the test, a pressure-reducing valve failed, which caused the pressure to drop below the

state-required 20 pounds per square inch (psi). He added that it was a good thing to know the valve was bad.

Dean Deasy said a consultant recommended replacing the valve. He explained that the biggest concern the Fire Department has regarding the valve is that it should open when there is a high demand from a hydrant. Dean added that currently they can't get the needed flow.

Dean explained there are rebuilt kits available, but the valve has been rebuilt in the past. He added that there is a bypass so water service won't be turned off when they replace it. Roger then explained the difference in cost and availability of a rebuilt kit and a new replacement.

Mike Hogan talked about the preliminary report the board has regarding the wastewater plant, which is about 60% complete. Roger explained the process for a 20-year evaluation required it be sent to the state when 60% complete.

Selectboard Update for Town Meeting 2024

The Selectboard would like to thank the voters of Cabot for having provided us the opportunity to serve our community in 2023. The Board considers 2023 to have been another challenging year. After dealing with COVID-19 the previous years, the Town faced a catastrophic flood in July 2023. The amount of damage was substantial, but future plans for flood mitigation are hopeful.

The Town has been working nonstop since the events of that terrible day - all of us working together: volunteers, first responders, Town employees and the non-profit sector. I hope we all remember the timeline: the Governor issued a state of emergency for flood impacted counties (including Wahington County) on Sunday July 9, and a few days later there was a disaster declaration issued by the White House for all of Vermont.

Those declarations started the ball rolling to ensure that State and Federal funding became available for individuals and municipalities. This funding is issued not as a matter of 'contract' but as a sacred promise to the citizens of the United States that - in moment of peril - we provide the resources to both rescue each other and help to rebuild in the aftermath. FEMA is the conduit for much of that funding.

After weeks and months of damage estimates, the State of Vermont reached a level of documented damage that exceeded \$500 million - this is far beyond the ceiling needed to reimburse towns for 90% of the damages incurred by the flood. Cabot is covered by this 'sacred promise' of funding for rescue and rebuilding. This information has been shared continuously and consistently in both public meetings hosted by the Cabot Selectboard, and in posts on various social media platforms. While it is true that the Town may incur expenses beyond the reimbursement amount of 90%, those expenses will be minimal compared to what we will receive.

The Fire Department building was officially condemned by the State of Vermont and will have been demolished by the time of this writing. A temporary building is being built by the recreation field. The old basketball court was torn up to accommodate the new construction and a new one will be built next to the structure. The temporary building, once vacated, can potentially be repurposed for numerous things. It will be available to purchase at a fully depreciated cost that FEMA will decide. The Town will have the opportunity to vote on that potential purchase and discuss uses for the potential repurposing of that building. We do not yet know what that cost will be.

One of the main functions of the Board is to produce a financial budget each year for the Town to vote on at Town Meeting. The Town approved the current fiscal year budget that runs from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, at last year's meeting. We are currently through seven months of our current budget cycle as this note is being written.

The next fiscal year (FY 2025) budget that covers the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, has taken considerable work at multiple budget meetings. The Board has set aside an hour or two for special budget meetings each week to discuss expenses needed to meet the fi-

nancial demands of the Town. At these meetings, various entities of the town that comprise both the General and Highway Funds presented their FY2025 budget requests. We have had a fair amount of public input and that is very appreciated. These are public meetings, and we invite the public to attend and give us their thoughts and suggestions.

Some comments on the articles to be voted on Town Meeting:

Art. 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$825,218 to defray the General Expenses of the Town, with an estimated \$210,089 to come from income and \$615,129 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

FY2025 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) Projected General Fund Operating Budget is \$825,218 as compared to last year's budget of \$726,619, an increase of \$98,599. There are no General Fund projects this year. All social service appropriations as outlined in this report are fully funded as requested by the organizations listed in this town report. That total is also included in Article 7 for all General Fund Appropriations.

Art. 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$1,041,393 to repair and maintain the Highways of the Town, including summer, winter, and special treatment, of which an estimated \$167,600 is to come from income and \$873,793 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

The FY2025 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025) Projected Highway Operating Budget totals \$1,041,393 as compared to last year's base budget of \$925,863, an increase of \$115,530. There are no projects scheduled other than FEMA flood projects. There will be some small patch paving and repairs needed in some areas and increased expenses for truck leasing, sand, salt and other needed highway costs. The road crew is fully staffed and has done an incredible job in this unusual winter of mud, snow and ice.

Art. 9. Do the citizens of the Town of Cabot wish to see continued service by the Cabot Emergency Ambulance Service as the primary transport ambulance service for the Town of Cabot? [Australian Ballot]

The Selectboard is very supportive of having emergency medical service for the Town, despite rumors you may have heard to the contrary. Cabot Ambulance has been given an appropriation for many years to supplement its operating costs. The July flood and the closing of the Fire Department Building forced the Cabot Ambulance to now house the ambulance in one of Goodrich's Sugar business buildings. The Cabot Ambulance chose not to have its membership be part of a Cabot Public Safety organization and be part of the Town.

The Selectboard chose at its budget discussion to have a separate line item for \$40,000 under EMS-Emergency Medical Services which allows them to issue an RFP to find the best Emergency Medical Transport Service for the Town. The Fire Department is developing a Fast Squad that can work alongside any ambulance service to respond to emergencies and assess and stabilize individuals so that a transport service can take

them to a hospital if necessary. Cabot will continue to have an ambulance service.

Art. 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot allow the Selectboard to appoint the Town Treasurer as permitted by the Vermont Legislature pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2651 € (d) and (f) for a term of one or three years? [Australian Ballot]

In 2017, the Vermont Legislature passed Act 27 allowing municipalities to give their legislative bodies the power to appoint their municipal clerks and treasurers. This legislation came about due to multiple financial reporting issues throughout the state. The Selectboard has a fiduciary responsibility to the town to make sure all its financial reporting meets the highest standards and complies with governmental accounting standards. Our current assistant treasurer is resigning to take a job in another town and has been an invaluable help to us through the post flood recovery process. We need to have someone who has governmental fund accounting experience and has experience in the public sector. The Treasurer has to keep a record of all tax money voted and disbursed. Administering flood recovery efforts and the ability to work with FEMA and other state and federal agencies is an important function of this job. The Board will advertise for this position if the town passes the article at Town Meeting. We encourage you to support this article.

Ongoing projects:

- Clarks Sawmill Dam: The Town is working with Central Vermont Regional Planning to submit documents for a Phase I environmental site assessment and to, concurrently, seek to enroll the site in Department of Con-

Heart

(see 'LTE - Heart', page 4)

investment. By valuing and investing in our local school, we not only save on financial resources but also ensure that our community benefits from a high-quality education.

The Innovative Spirit of Small School Education

In the last five years, the school administration has fostered the development of innovative learning programs, making education an exciting and dynamic journey for students. Our school is now designed to accommodate fluctuations in student numbers without compromising on the quality of education. These programs go beyond traditional teaching methods, encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and hands-on learning experiences. This is becoming one of our greatest strengths, allowing us to offer a range of programs that might be envied by larger institutions. From personalized learning plans to project-based learning initiatives, our school has embraced innovation, ensuring that our students are not just learners, but thinkers prepared to face the challenges of the future. The commitment to innovation in education sets our small school apart, preparing students for the challenges of the modern world.

In an era where larger institutions often take center stage, the merits of a small school cannot be overstated. The advantages of attending our small K-12 school extend far beyond the traditional academic curriculum. Here, students

have unique opportunities for leadership, community engagement, and personal growth that larger schools simply cannot offer. The close-knit environment fosters deep relationships between students and teachers, creating a supportive network that encourages every child to reach their full potential. Our students learn the value of community, working together on local projects and initiatives that reinforce the importance of civic responsibility and collective well-being. Unlike larger schools, where students may feel lost in the crowd, our small school allows educators to tailor their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of each student.

- FEMA projects: the Town is working with FEMA and engineers on five permanent flood-related projects that will be completed this spring and summer.
- Engineering study at the wastewater plant. Grants will be applied for to update various areas of our wastewater plant and to make some changes to the Town water system.
- Flood Taskforce: The Town has been meeting with a committee of committed people on various strategies for mitigation and resilience. A grant has been written as a first step in this process. There is a lot of work to be accomplished but this is a good first step.
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan- A LHMP has been written with the help of some great folks in town and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. This plan is necessary for FEMA reimbursement.

Closing thoughts:

The Town has a lot of work yet to be done. We appreciate all the help and encouragement this past year. The Board is very aware of the difficult financial situation many of us face as the July flood damage has taken a toll on the town. We have worked very hard to propose a budget that is fiscally responsible and meets the ongoing needs of the Town. The Selectboard has agreed to use the revenue from the sale of the Masonic Hall to Neighbors in Action to apply to this proposed budget to reduce the amount of taxes needed to fulfill this request.

Thank you. Michael J Hogan Chair for the Cabot Selectboard

have unique opportunities for leadership, community engagement, and personal growth that larger schools simply cannot offer. The close-knit environment fosters deep relationships between students and teachers, creating a supportive network that encourages every child to reach their full potential. Our students learn the value of community, working together on local projects and initiatives that reinforce the importance of civic responsibility and collective well-being. Unlike larger schools, where students may feel lost in the crowd, our small school allows educators to tailor their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of each student.

Beyond academics, our small school plays a crucial role in shaping the social fabric of our rural Vermont town. It serves as a hub for community events, fostering a sense of pride and identity among residents. The school becomes a unifying force, bringing families, educators, and community members together to support the growth and development of our youth.

Conclusion

What makes a school "too small" is not a matter of numbers but of vision and values. Our K-12 school in rural Vermont exemplifies how small schools can not only thrive but excel, providing students with a rich, personalized educational experience while serving as a cornerstone of community identity. As we look to the future, let us continue to cherish and support this vital institution, recognizing that in its classrooms and corridors lies the heart and soul of our town.

Sincerely, Johanna Thibault

2024 - Warning Town of Cabot - 2024

The Legal Voters of the Town of Cabot are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Town of Cabot Willey Building, 3084 Main Street, Cabot, Vermont, on **Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at ten o'clock** in the forenoon [10:00 A.M.] to transact the following business from the floor. [The polls will be open from 7:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. at the Willey Building, 3084 Main Street, Cabot, VT.]

Art. 1. To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year.

Art. 2. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot vote to accept the Town Report as printed for FY23?

Art. 3. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot authorize payment of real and personal property taxes on August 22, 2024, and November 21, 2024, by delivery to Cabot Town Hall postmarked on or before that date; and, Establish that overdue taxes will bear interest at a rate of one percent per month or fraction thereof for the first three months and thereafter one and one-half percent per month or fraction thereof from the due date of such tax pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 5136; and,

Establish the amount of the penalty charged by the collector of delinquent taxes for payments made after the due date for payment at 8 percent of the tax collected pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1674(3) (A)?

Art. 4. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot elect all Town Officers required by law, according to law?

The following Articles will be voted on by Australian Ballot and may be discussed on the floor except for Articles 5 through 6.

Art. 5. To elect a Selectperson for a term of two years. [Australian Ballot]

Art. 6. To elect a Selectperson for a term of three years. [Australian Ballot]

Art. 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$825,218 to defray the General Expenses of the Town, with an estimated \$210,089 to come from income and \$615,129 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

Art. 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$1,041,393 to repair and maintain the Highways of the Town, including summer, winter, and special treatment, of which an estimated \$167,600 is to come from income and \$873,793 from local taxes? [Australian Ballot]

Art. 9. Do the citizens of the Town of Cabot wish to see continued service by

the Cabot Emergency Ambulance Service as the primary transport ambulance service for the Town of Cabot? [Australian Ballot]

Art. 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot allow the Selectboard to appoint the Town Treasurer as permitted by the Vermont Legislature pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2651 € (d) and (f) for a term of one or three years? [Australian Ballot]

Art. 11. To transact any other non-binding business that may come before said meeting.

Art. 12. To adjourn this meeting.

Dated this 24th day of January A.D. 2024
This Warning was recorded before posting,

Attest: Betty Ritter, Cabot Town Clerk

REGISTER TO VOTE:

There is no deadline to register to vote. You will be able to vote on the day of the election. You can register to vote prior to voting by visiting the Cabot Town Clerk's Office or going online to <https://olvr.vermont.gov>. Registration will be available at the Town Clerk's office on any day prior to the election between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Registration will be available on Election Day during the hours the polls are open, which is 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Willey Building, 3084 Main Street, Cabot, VT.

EARLY or ABSENTEE BALLOTS: The latest you can request ballots is the close of business in the Town Clerk's office on March 4, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The voter or family member may request an early or absentee ballot in person, in writing or by telephone. Other persons may request an Absentee Ballot for another registered Cabot voter (in person or in writing), and the Town Clerk's Office will mail that Absentee Ballot to the registered voter.

Following are the ways for early voting or absentee voting: (1) vote in the Town Clerk's office before the deadline; (2) a voter may take their ballots out of the Town Clerk's office for himself/herself and return in the same manner as if the ballots were received by mail; (3) have a ballot mailed to you, and mail or return it to the Town Clerk's office before election day or to the polling place before 7:00 p.m. on election day; or (4) if you are sick or disabled, request the Town Clerk, who must be accompanied by a Justice of the Peace, to bring a ballot to you at your home no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

losses due to not being able to get into the woods. Henry also said that logging trespass is a big issue, and there are problems with enforcement and people are getting away with the theft. He added that they are trying to put teeth into the law.

Henry also spoke about the opioid crisis, and how he is involved in meetings attempting to figure out what can be done. R.D. brought up broadband and wanted to make sure the legislature hasn't forgotten money is still needed in that area. The meeting ended with a short conversation about food security, the role of food banks, and the relationship between food banks and farms.

Henry Pearl

(continued from page 6)

Ben Vitale asked Henry what else should everyone be paying attention to? Henry said there are little tweaks here and there, and mentioned one that he was excited about. He explained there has always been an exemption for people that slaughter under 1000 birds, but they were always limited to selling whole birds. He said they were going to get rid of the limitation so people can sell parts of birds.

Henry then talked about forestry, and said it has been a horrible few years. He said they are creating a grant program to help people who can document their

2024 - Cabot School District - 2024 Warning for Annual Meeting

The legal voters of the Cabot School District, Cabot, Vermont, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Cabot School Performing Arts Center, Cabot, Vermont on Monday, March 4, 2024 at six-thirty in the evening to transact the following business not involving Australian Ballot. Australian Ballot voting will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 with the polls open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Willey Building, 3084 Main St, Cabot, VT 05647.

Article 1.

To elect a School District Moderator for a term of one (1) year.

Article 2.

To elect three School Directors, one for a three year term, one for a two year term, and one to complete a two-year term that was vacated. **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 3.

Shall the voters of the Town School District approve the minutes of the March 6, 2023 Annual School District Meeting?

Article 4.

To hear a report of the School Directors.

Article 5.

Shall the voters of Cabot vote to close the high school (grades 9-12) at the Cabot School and tuition students in those grades to eligible schools of their choice, while retaining the elementary and middle school grades (pre-K thru 8th), effective July 2024? **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 6.

[Non-binding/advisory] Shall the voters of the Cabot School District advise the School Board that they desire to maintain the school in its current PK-12 configuration? **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 7.

Shall the voters of the Cabot School Dis-

trict authorize the Cabot School Board to expend four million four hundred ninety thousand three hundred nineteen dollars (\$4,490,319.00) which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 8.

Shall the voters of Cabot authorize the School Board to apply for and accept financing in the amount of \$500,000 to be used for renovations of the main school building to accommodate moving students in grades K-6 into the main building, to be paid over a term of ten (10) years? The first year cost of this financing (\$50,000 principal) is included in the FY25 budget to be voted in Article 7. **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 9.

Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2025 in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes? **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 10.

Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Cabot School Board to hold any audited fund balance as of June 30, 2024 in a reserve fund to be expended under the control and direction of the Board of School Directors for the purpose of operating the school? **(To be voted on by Australian Ballot)**

Article 11.

To transact any additional business that may legally come before the this meeting.

Article 12.

To Adjourn



Two out of three Vermont taxpayers are eligible to use Free File to file their personal income tax returns securely online for free. Free File is for both federal and Vermont tax returns and is offered by some of the same commercial vendors that offer paid return filing.

If your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) was \$79,000 or less in 2023, you may qualify for one or more of the filing offers. To ensure you can file both state and federal returns for free, be sure to use the vendor link provided on the Free File page (tax.vermont.gov/free-file).

Figure This Out

(continued from page 2)

to be made. Some will be statewide, but some will be particular to local school districts.

Local conversations about school budgets being voted on soon need to start now! School boards need to hear from their communities and communities need to listen to their school boards. We can no

longer have meetings where no one shows up and communication is non-existent. Local democracy and public input require communication. School boards will very soon be reaching out to explain budget decisions and property tax rate impacts. Please take this opportunity to engage in conversation on this very important topic.

Explanation of School Property Taxes

by Frank Kampf,
Cabot School Board Member

Education finance is complicated, and even those of us on the School Board can find ourselves confused. This is an attempt to explain how your education property tax is determined. First, to understand how the tax rate is calculated, one must understand when education property tax is collected, it all goes to the state, and the state then divides up all the money collected across the state and distributes it back to each school district.

In a recent interview on Vermont Public, Vermont Representative Emilie Kornheiser, chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means, explained that Vermont's education tax system is different than everywhere else in the nation. She explained that usually budgets are set and then the government figures out how to spend the money. She added that in Vermont's education tax system, the individual school districts determine how much they are going to spend, and then the state figures out how much needs to be collected from property taxes.

The state controls how much property tax is collected throughout the state with the property yield rate, which is part of the education property tax formula. Before school districts create their budgets, the state sets the property and income yield rates, as well as the Non-Homestead (pre-CLA) property tax rate. This information is released by the Department of Taxes on or before December 1 each year. This allows school boards to estimate the tax impact of their proposed budgets.

After all the school districts in the state have had their budgets approved by each district's voters, the state can determine exactly how much money needs to be collected through property taxes. The state sometimes changes the yield rate to account for differences in their estimate and the actual total of all the school budgets across the state. Thus, when a school district sets its budget, the tax rate is only an estimate.

One of the ways the state determines how much each town will contribute to the total education taxes collected state-

wide is through a number assigned to each school based upon its enrollment. This used to be called "Equalized Pupils", but the recent changes in law have replaced it with Long Term Weighted Average Daily Membership, or "LTW ADM". The explanation on how the LTW ADM is determined for each school is complicated and is not the subject of this article. However, one can think of the LTW ADM number as one of the factors used by the state to determine how much education property tax the town must collect equitably.

Since property taxes are based upon each property's appraised value, the state must account for the differences between each town. Every town appraises property on a different schedule, and the state calculates the accuracy of the town's current appraisals based upon property sales during the previous year. These sales are used to create a percentage known as the common level of appraisal (CLA).

If properties are selling at their appraised value, then the CLA is 100%. However, when properties are selling for more than their appraised value, as has been happening since the pandemic, the CLA is lowered. Likewise, if properties are selling for less than the appraised value, then the CLA is increased. In this manner, the state equalizes the appraised values for all properties across the state.

All these factors are part of the tax rate calculation for each school district. There are two different types of tax rates, the homestead tax rate, and the non-homestead tax rate, formerly known as the non-residential tax rate.

The non-homestead tax rate is set by the state and is the same for all towns, but adjusted by the CLA of each town. This year, the state pre-CLA adjusted non-homestead tax rate is \$1.44 for every \$100 of assessed property value. When adjusted by the CLA for Cabot, which is 68.87%, the resultant rate is \$2.0909 for every \$100 of assessed property value.

The homestead tax rate is specific for each town, and is calculated by the following formula:

$$\text{Homestead Tax Rate} = \frac{\text{Education Spending per LTW ADM}}{\text{Vermont Property Yield Rate}} \times \frac{\text{Base Education Tax Rate (\$1.00)}}{\text{Common Level of Appraisal (CLA)}}$$

This year, the state has set the yield rate at \$9452. Cabot school's ADM is 318.84, and the proposed budget results in an education spending level of 4,442,195, which equals a per LWT ADM spending amount of \$13,932. The 2024 CLA for Cabot is 68.87%, which results in an estimated homestead tax rate of \$2.1403.

However, how the education property tax is calculated for each individual

$$\text{Income Sensitive Tax Rate} = \frac{\text{Education Spending per LTW ADM}}{\text{Vermont Income Yield Rate}} \times \frac{2}{100}$$

This year, the state set the Income Yield rate at \$10,300, and Cabot's per LWT ADM spending amount of \$13,932 results in an Equalized Income Tax Rate of 2.705%.

The income based portion of the education tax rate does not appear on prop-

erty is not solely based upon the tax rate generated by this formula. The system places a lesser tax burden on lower income households. Thus, the education property tax is based upon the assessed property value and the household income.

The income sensitive tax rate is also specific for each town, and is calculated using the following formula:

erty tax bills. The state calculates the actual education property tax based upon household income reported on the homestead declaration (HS-122) and property tax credit claim (HS-144) forms. Then the state issues a payment to the town, which is deducted from the

Primary Election and CVCCSD Ballots

The image displays three sample ballots. The top two are for the Republican and Democratic parties for the March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary. The bottom ballot is for the Central Vermont Career Center School District Annual School Meeting on the same date. Each ballot includes instructions to voters and a list of candidates or measures to be voted on. A large, semi-transparent watermark of a hand holding a pencil is overlaid across the center of the three ballots.

tax bill, to adjust the education tax amount based upon the income sensitive tax rate.

There are seven (7) different tax groups defined for calculating education property taxes based upon the household income and assessed property value.

- For household incomes up to \$47,000 and property values up to \$400,000, the tax rate is solely based upon income and is set statewide at 2.0% of the income.
- For household incomes up to \$47,000 and property values over \$400,000, the tax rate is based upon 2.0% of income, plus the homestead tax rate of \$2.1405 for every \$100 of assessed value over \$400,000
- For household income over \$47,000 and up to \$90,000, and assessed value up to \$400,000, the tax rate is solely based upon income using the income sensitive tax rate of 2.705% of the income.
- For household incomes over \$47,000 and up to \$90,000, and property values over \$400,000, the tax rate is based upon the income sensitive tax

rate at 2.705% of income, plus the homestead tax rate of \$2.1405 for every \$100 of assessed value over \$400,000.

- For household income over \$90,000 and up to \$137,000, and assessed value up to \$225,000, the tax rate is based upon the income sensitive tax rate at 2.705% of income.
- For household incomes over \$90,000 and up to \$137,000, and property values over \$225,000, the tax rate is based upon the income sensitive tax rate at 2.705% of income, plus the homestead tax rate of \$2.1405 for every \$100 of assessed value over \$225,000.
- For household income over \$137,000 the tax rate is solely based upon the assessed property value, and is the estimated tax rate homestead tax rate of \$2.1405 for every \$100 of assessed value over \$400,000.

These tax groups are shown in the different boxes of the following table. Note that the gray area of the table indicates education property taxes that are based solely on income.

Guide to Cabot School Town Meeting Articles

by Frank Kampf,
Cabot School Board Member

The following provides a brief explanation of each article that will be on the Australian Ballot for the Cabot School District. If the voter wishes to have further information, there are other newspaper articles available in this edition of the Chronicle, as well as the previous February edition of the Chronicle. Previous editions can be found on the Cabot Chronicle website at cabotchronicle.org.

Readers are also encouraged to attend the Cabot School District Annual Meeting, to be held in the Cabot School Performing Arts Center (CSPAC), on Monday, March 4, 2024, at 6:30 pm. The School Board will be presenting information regarding these articles and the budget, and will answer questions from the public.

Article 2.
To elect three School Directors, one for a three-year term, one for a two-year term, and one to complete a two-year term that was vacated. (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

There are three positions up for election at this year's town meeting. Voters can select from the names listed on the ballot for each position, or write in the name of a legal resident of Cabot.

Article 5. *Shall the voters of Cabot vote to close the high school (grades 9-12) at the Cabot School and tuition students in those grades to eligible schools of their choice, while retaining the elementary and middle school grades (pre-K thru 8th), effective July 2024? (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)*

This article was put on the ballot through the petition process and is not endorsed by the School Board. If this article passes, there will be no high school in Cabot for the next academic year. The students attending high school will have the flexibility of attending another state-approved school, should the chosen school accept them. Independent schools can refuse to accept students based upon various factors such as, but not limited to, capacity, behavioral issues, and educational support needs.

Should Article 5 pass, the budget needed to support it is projected to be at least \$4,620,319 based upon the current number of enrolled students that will be high school students next year. The estimated tuition amount for each student is \$22,500, excluding any special educa-

tion costs, which is the amount used by the Caledonia Cooperative School District (Walden, Barnet, and Waterford).

The projected budget for this article exceeds the budget being voted upon in Article 7, and if this article passes, the School Board would need to warn a vote for an updated budget. The board would try to determine if there would be additional students (i.e. home schooled) that would enroll to take advantage of school choice, and the budget amount may be higher than currently projected. The board is not permitted to intentionally run a deficit when that deficit is foreseeable.

Article 6.
[Non-binding/advisory] Shall the voters of the Cabot School District advise the School Board that they desire to maintain the school in its current PK-12 configuration? (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

The School Board wants to create a long-term strategic plan that considers the sustainability of the school and wishes to know what the voters of Cabot prefer for a future school configuration. Should both Article 5 (High School Choice) and Article 7 (Proposed School Budget for PK-12) fail, the School Board will not be provided with a clear indication of the voters' opinion. The results of this article will provide guidance to the School Board in its future conversations.

Article 7.
Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Cabot School Board to expend four million four hundred ninety thousand three hundred nineteen dollars (\$4,490,319.00) which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

This Article is the budget that addresses the needs for running the school with grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12th in the coming school year. The increases to this budget from last year's budget are largely out of the control of the School Board and are mostly driven by increases in the Supervisory Union assessments, the need for additional staffing, the collective bargaining agreement (teacher's contracts), the cost of health care set by the state, and the previous years' deficits, which were largely caused by the break-down of the heating plant.

The homestead tax rate related to this budget, should it pass, is estimated to be as follows for an assessed value of **\$250,000:**

Household Income up to \$47,000	2.00% of income
Household Income over \$47,000 and up to \$90,000	2.71% of income
Household Income over \$90,000 and up to \$137,000	*See Explanation Below
Household Income over \$137,000	\$2.14 for every \$100 of assessed value
Non-Homestead Tax Rate (vacation homes, businesses, rentals, etc.)	\$2.09 for every \$100 of assessed value

**Explanation for Household Income over \$90,000 and up to \$137,000: The tax rate is the combination of 2.71% of household income plus \$2.14 for every \$100 of assessed value over \$225,000.*

(see 'School Town Meeting Articles', page 12)

TOWN OF CABOT

NOTICE OF TERMS OF PROPOSED CONVEYANCE OF REAL ESTATE, PURSUANT TO TITLE 24, SECTION 1061(a)(1)

Pursuant to Title 24, Section 1061(a)(1), the Town of Cabot hereby provides notice of the terms of a proposed conveyance of the parcel of land with all buildings and improvements known as the "Masonic Hall" to Faith in Action Northern Communities Partnership Inc, dba Neighbors in Action. The proposed sale price is \$147,500.00, subject to a fundraising contingency whereby purchaser would obtain 80% of the purchase price on or before November 1, 2023, and also subject to the Town providing seller financing of the remaining 20% under a note and mortgage. A warranty deed to be provided at closing, which is set for December 1, 2023.

A copy of the proposed purchase and sale agreement may be obtained by contacting the Town Clerk, Betty Ritter, PO Box 36, 3084 Main Street, Cabot, VT 05647. Phone number: 802-563-2279. E-mail: tc@cabotvt.us.

Pursuant to Title 24, Section 1061(a)(2), if a petition signed by five percent of the legal voters of the municipality objecting to the proposed conveyance is presented to the municipal clerk within 30 days of the date of posting and publication of the notice required by subdivision (1) of this subsection, the legislative body shall cause the question of whether the municipality shall convey the real estate to be considered at a special or annual meeting called for that purpose. After the meeting, the real estate may be conveyed unless a majority of the voters of the municipality present and voting vote to disapprove of the conveyance.

Unless such a petition is filed, the Selectboard may proceed with the proposed conveyance. 24 V.S.A. § 1061(a)(1).

Respectfully submitted.

Town of Cabot Selectboard

Dated: November 22 2022

OFFICIAL BALLOT

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

TOWN OF CABOT, VERMONT

MARCH 5, 2024

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- Use BLACK Pen to fill in the oval. DO NOT USE PENCIL.
- To vote for a person whose name is printed on the ballot, fill in the oval to the right of the name of that person.
- To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the person's name in the blank space provided and fill in the oval to the right of the write-in line. Please use block letters and stay within the box provided for write-ins.
- Do not vote for more candidates than the "VOTE for NOT MORE THAN" for an office.
- If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election official and obtain another ballot. DO NOT ERASE.

FOR SELECTPERSON

FOR 3 YEARS

MICHAEL J. HOGAN

(Write-in)

FOR SELECTPERSON

FOR 2 YEARS

WALTER "SKIP" BOTHFELD

(Write-in)

FOR SCHOOL DIRECTOR

FOR 1 YEAR

ERICA FUCELLO

(Write-in)

FOR SCHOOL DIRECTOR

FOR 2 YEARS

JASON MONACO

(Write-in)

TOWN ARTICLES

Art. 7. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$825,218 to defray the General Expenses of the Town, with an estimated \$210,069 to come from income and \$615,129 from local taxes?

YES

NO

Art. 8. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot appropriate the sum of \$1,041,393 to repair and maintain the Highways of the Town, including summer, winter, and special treatment, of which an estimated \$167,000 is to come from income and \$873,793 from local taxes?

YES

NO

Art. 9. Do the citizens of the Town of Cabot wish to see continued service by the Cabot Emergency Ambulance Service as the primary transport ambulance service for the Town of Cabot?

YES

NO

Art. 10. Shall the voters of the Town of Cabot allow the Selectboard to appoint the Town Treasurer as permitted by the Vermont Legislature pursuant to 17 V.S.A. 2651 (d) and (e) for a term of one or three years?

YES

NO

SCHOOL ARTICLES

Art. 5. Shall the voters of Cabot vote to close the high school (grades 9-12) at the Cabot School and tuition students in those grades to eligible schools of their choice, while retaining the elementary and middle school grades (pre-K thru 8th), effective July 2024?

YES

NO

Art. 6. [Non-binding/advisory] Shall the voters of the Cabot School District advise the School Board that they desire to maintain the school in its current PK-12 configuration?

YES

NO

Art. 7. Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Cabot School Board to expend four million four hundred ninety thousand three hundred nineteen dollars (\$4,490,319.00) which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year?

YES

NO

Art. 8. Shall the voters of Cabot authorize the School Board to apply for and accept financing in the amount of \$500,000 to be used for renovations of the main school building to accommodate moving students in grades K-6 into the main building to be paid over a term of ten (10) years? The first year cost of this financing (\$50,000 principal) is included in the FY25 budget to be voted in Article 7.

YES

NO

Art. 9. Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Cabot School Board to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2025 in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes?

YES

NO

Art. 10. Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Cabot School Board to hold any audited fund balance as of June 30, 2024 in a reserve fund to be expended under the control and direction of the Board of School Directors for the purpose of operating the school?

YES

NO

Building Back Safer and Better for the Kids of Cabot!

by The Chief of Cabot Fire Dept.

As some of you might not know, the old basketball court at the Rec field had to be demolished. This decision, unfortunately, was made to make room for the structure to temporarily house the fire department due to restrictions on the town lot, and wetland boundaries that are within the lot.

Because the basketball court was removed, it became a high priority with me to establish something for the kids to gain out of this devastating storm from July. They were just as much affected by the storm as the rest of us.

After many meetings, a new basketball court is now in the contractual stage with FEMA, to be built this spring at the Rec field. The court will have new high fencing to prevent any basketballs from going astray and new very durable hoops that are easily adjustable to fit the various sizes of the kiddos here in Cabot. The new court itself was moved back further away from the road for safety. The surface will be professionally done and striped. There will also be plenty of parking in front of the basketball court for parents to sit and watch, as well as the possibility of benches around the court.

I've also had many lengthy conversations with Lauren McCaffrey (VYP Community Coordinator for Cabot Vermont Afterschool, Inc.) and with Cameron North (Cabot Rec committee). Both are very much on board with the newly de-

signed basketball court and are excited about the project, and I want to thank them for their many hours on the phone with me and the tons of emails we exchanged.

The engineers also applied several hours into the design to redirect any surface water around the court and the new parking area, so surface water runoff is not directed into the lower soccer field as it used to be.

Some "added features" are also being supplied at no cost to the taxpayers due to a 100% grant that Lauren had acquired. Prep work for items like the possible storage shed, drinking fountain, and bike rack are just some of the items that the kids of Cabot will have a say on. Prep work for many of these items was worked into the FEMA contract.

The new modern court should be open for use by the summer of 2024!

In the end, it's a 3-point shot for the Kids of Cabot!

Be safe, Dean Deasy – Chief
Cabot Fire Department
Chief@Cabotfiredept.com



Bridge Restored; Curse Remains

by R. D. Eno

The Yellow House in the center of Cabot village, with its distinctive second-story portico, stands right beside snowmobile trail #232F, part of an extensive VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) network of recreational corridors that interlaces the entire state. Groomed by the Twinfield Snow Travelers club, the trail enters the village behind the Willey Building and crosses the Winooski River just behind the Yellow House, locally known as Goldie's, after a long-dead but well-remembered occupant, Goldie Hopkins.

With the trail passing its front door and village parking across the street, the Yellow House is ideally situated to serve as a hostelry, offering rest and refreshment not only to winter sportsfolk but summer bikers, hikers and other visitors as well. But you'd think Goldie had laid a curse on the place. Over the last 20 years, half a dozen eateries of various descriptions struggled and failed to gain a foothold there. But two years ago, Russell Statman, an avid snowmobiler, inspired by the location, bought the building as a home for Headwaters Restaurant. It would be the most ambitious of all these culinary enterprises.

Determined to create a fine dining establishment with an adventurous menu and a well-stocked bar, Russell engaged another passionate snowmobiler, Chris Porter, owner of 45° North Construction in Williston, with whom he had worked previously, to completely remodel the premises, moving the kitchen downstairs to make room for the bar and building a deck commanding a picturesque view of the river. With Cabot Arts, the Den at Harry's Hardware, Ride the Ridges and the iconic July 4th Celebration drawing ever-larger crowds to the village, Headwaters promised to become an all-seasons destination and the capstone of Cabot's downtown economic revitalization.

Everything was prepared for a summer opening. Then disaster struck. On Monday, July 10, with Headwaters still under construction, a deluge of historic magnitude flooded the village. (At one point a Cabot School weather station measured rainfall at a rate of 10 inches an hour!) The Winooski breached its banks, and the culvert in the center of the village became plugged with debris. Torrents of stormwater rushing down the Danville Hill tributary burst over Main Street, roared down the VAST trail, threatening both Headwaters and Harry's, and crashed into the bridge. The buildings survived, but the bridge was not so lucky. Chris Porter was on the scene to witness the catastrophe.

"I watched it happening," he says, "and I thought, what a terrible tragedy! It wasn't actually the Winooski that destroyed the bridge, though the river took out much of the bank. It was the water coming over Main Street that wrecked it. And it wasn't the only one. There were bridges out in East Montpelier and Waterbury. Things looked pretty bleak."

Chris immediately reached out to Matt Tetreault, VAST's trails administrator, and Twinfield Snow Travelers trailmaster Carter Martin. An assessment of #232F was hastily arranged, and Matt realized that the length of the span matched the dimensions of a pair of 75-foot beams he remembered lying unused at Craig Brown's welding and equipment rental in Bristol. If Chris would arrange and pay for trucking, VAST would purchase and donate the beams.

"It felt like I made 100 phone calls," Chris remembers, "to coordinate with Craig, with Barrett's Trucking, Catamount Crane Service, Johnny Schmitt and Ben Ackermann to get those beams loaded and delivered to Cabot."

Russell kicked in to cover the costs of transportation, site preparation and materials while Chris consulted with hydrologists from the Agency of Natural Resources to complete the necessary permits. Johnny Schmitt, who grooms trails for Twinfield – and who worked diligently for Cabot during our municipal flood recovery! – brought in his excavator and donated his time to repair and improve the embankments alongside Ben Ackermann and Morgan Churchill. Meanwhile, crews and volunteers cleared the mud out of Headwaters, and the remodeling proceeded apace. On September 7, Headwaters held its grand opening and customers with its outstanding cuisine.

Two months later, on November 15, village traffic was halted while an enormous flatbed trailer, bearing the two beams, backed itself gingerly down the resurfaced incline between Harry's and Headwaters to the riverbank, where excavators hoisted the new bridge supports into place. In early December, with the first snow already on the ground, Carter Martin and a crew of Twinfield volunteers decked the bridge with new planks. Against all odds, the bridge has been completely restored just in time for snow-traveling season.

But Goldie hasn't repealed her curse – at least not entirely. Despite the glowing reviews, great service and appreciative crowds, Headwaters ran into management difficulties and in mid-January went on "hiatus" (temporarily, its Facebook page assures us), from which we hope something, if not Headwaters itself, will soon emerge. On the bright side, snowmobile traffic instead of floodwater is flowing over the new bridge!



Finished bridge.



Flood waters rampaging past restaurant and hardware store.



Cabot Children's Center

*Located on ground floor of church,
02 Common Road Cabot, VT 05647*

Open House

March 20th, 2024

5:00-6:00pm

**Cabot children's center invites you to
come view our new space, meet our
amazing staff and learn more about
our program that specializes in
infant-3 year old care!**

Snacks-Door raffle- and activities

**If you have any questions please reach out to
cabotchildrenscenter@gmail.com**

School Town Meeting Articles

(continued from page 10)

The tax rate increase is on par with the average tax increase that most school districts around the state are currently proposing to their voters. The state may change some factors of the formula used to calculate the tax rate, and thus the tax rates listed above are estimates. In past years, the state has made changes that resulted in a lower tax rate than the projected tax rate. However, the state can change factors that also increase the tax rate.

Article 8.
Shall the voters of Cabot authorize the School Board to apply for and accept financing in the amount of \$500,000 to be used for renovations of the main school building to accommodate moving students in grades K-6 into the main building, to be paid over a term of ten (10) years? First year cost of this financing (\$50,000 principal) is included in the FY25 budget to be voted in Article 7. (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

The administration has proposed swapping the orientation of the campus to improve the school climate in the elementary grades. Currently, when a child needs to be temporarily removed from a classroom in the elementary grades, school staff must escort the student outside. Having all the elementary classrooms in one building, with counselors and other staff in close proximity, will better support student needs. The additional benefit of swapping the campus around would be the placement of high school classrooms into a campus that more closely resembles a university, with classes in separate buildings.

The success or failure of this article will not change the proposed budget in Article 7. If Article 7 should pass, and this article fails, the budgeted \$50,000

would be put towards infrastructure repairs or improvements.

Article 9.
Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Board of School Directors to borrow money to pay its lawful debts and expenses for the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed 90% of the anticipated collection of taxes and receipts of other funds to be used for those purposes? (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

The school year starts on July 1 and taxes are not collected until later in the year. Thus, it is necessary for the school district to borrow money to pay for all expenses until the funds from tax collection are provided by the Town of Cabot to the school district. This article is always part of the school district warning

The business office at the supervisory union has negotiated terms with a local financial institution that allows for borrowed funds to be placed into an investment account. The proceeds from the investment account can then be used to pay the interest on the loan. The end result is that the cost of the loan is minimal.

Article 10.
Shall the voters of the Cabot School District authorize the Board of School Directors to hold any audited fund balance as of June 30, 2024, in a reserve fund to be expended under the control and direction of the Board of School Directors for the purpose of operating the school? (To be voted on by Australian Ballot)

This article authorizes the school district to allocate any surpluses from the current fiscal year towards the expenses of the next fiscal year. Should there be a deficit in the current fiscal year which ends on June 30, it is required by law to include that amount in the budget for the following fiscal year.

Learning Beyond the Classroom Abounds at Cabot School



by Rebecca Tatistchef, Principal

On February 15, seven Cabot High School students arrived at school early. They were greeted with parting clouds and a beautiful blue-sky day. Their trip would take them across the state to the Robert Frost Trail and Middlebury College. Their work was to gather information and learn to create their own poetry trail in town. It is not often that I get to join our young people on trips like these. Unlike a field trip that might be focused on fun or peripheral learning, fieldwork that is embedded in our classes is purposeful and helps students gather valuable information that they will use later. This was the third such trip students had been on for their Poetry Trail class. They visited the poetry trail in Hardwick and walked the trail where their poems will be installed.

As we get breakfast – it’s muffin day and they are warm out of the oven, not to be missed — we gather into two cars for the beginning of our journey. While the narrative of cutting budgets and lack of transportation abounds, our dedicated staff volunteer their own vehicles to transport students. Our school car is used daily to help manage transportation to the tech center. Instead of seeing transportation as a barrier and simply not taking trips, staff have become experts in ensuring students have access to meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom. We are headed out of town across Route 100 and the Green Mountains to Breadloaf and the Robert Frost Trail. The journey there is filled with students talking and asking questions. Our topics range from table top card games to becoming a volunteer firefighter. They wonder about the fate of the restaurant in town and encourage each other to try out for sports. Once again, I am reminded that small is deep.

We park at the trailside and begin a walk around the one-mile trail. The snow glistens in the sun and our shadows play as we stop at the first poem. Students are equipped with clipboards and pencils to write down their observations. They touch the poetry displays, wondering what they are made of and discussing the possibilities of their own displays.

They read the poems quietly and note the words that stand out. We come to understand that each poem was chosen purposefully to match the landscape before us. And we end our trip around the trail gazing out at a meadow covered with snow with the light shining on the field waiting to awaken in spring.

As we continue the journey, a student comments, “As I read those poems, it was like I was hearing them in Robert Frost’s voice. We listened to him read a poem yesterday and when I was here, it was like he was here, too.” It led us to wonder, should there be a sound element to our poetry trail?

We arrived to lunch in the Middlebury Student Center; for some students, this was one of few times they had been on a college campus. We ate quickly so we could make it to the library special collections on time to see artifacts from Robert Frost’s writing and a collection of object poems. Students wandered the artifact room, gently moving and sketching the poems, asking questions about how old the artifacts were, how they were acquired. Their genuine curiosity and interest was compelling; there were no passive learners in our group.

At the tail end of our time on campus we split up, and a small group explored the rest of the library. They journeyed silently to the top of the round building, exploring the art and the stacks and stopping in the nooks to quietly take in the view of the mountains beyond. Having been pulled away from rows of books, it was time to go, they commented, “I could live in this library, but it’s lacking one thing, the Rory touch” (referring to our current librarian).

Their teacher this semester, Sonia Scherr, is our community coordinator. Sonia has worked tirelessly over the past few years to help build connection between school and community experiences. This class is just one of many opportunities where students are engaged this semester to create something for our town. I hope you’ll join these students in the spring to walk their poetry trail here in town and ask about the experiences, near and far, they drew on to create the trail.

Impact of CLA on School Tax Rate

Assuming Yield Rate of \$9,775 (subject to change)					
Town	preCLA rate	postCLA rate	Jan 2024 CLA	Last reappraisal	Avg CLA change per year since reappraisal
Cabot	1.43	2.07	69.08%	2020	7.73%
Marshfield (TUS)	1.37	1.57	87.26%	2022	6.37%
Walden (CCSD)	1.55	1.74	89.08%	2022	5.46%
Waterford (CCSD)	1.55	1.84	84.24%	2021	5.25%
Danville	1.47	1.72	85.47%	2021	4.84%
Barnet (CCSD)	1.55	1.90	81.58%	2020	4.61%
Hardwick	1.33	1.98	67.29%	2016	4.09%
Peacham	1.62	1.95	83.08%	2019	3.38%
Wolcott	1.15	1.56	73.47%	2014	2.65%
Plainfield (TUS)	1.37	1.96	69.90%	2009	2.01%
Greensboro	1.33	1.86	71.61%	2007	1.67%
Woodbury	1.33	1.81	73.47%	2007	1.56%
Stannard	1.60	1.88	85.29%	2007	0.87%
Cabot Ranking	7th lowest	highest	2nd worst	5th/6th newest	highest

CABOT ARTS SHOW AND TELL

Cabot Visual Arts' Show and Tell folks will gather in the Willey Building on

March 24, 2024 , 2 p.m.-4 p.m.



CABOT PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS

LIBRARY HOURS:

Monday noon - 6 pm, Tuesday 10 am - 6 pm, Wednesday 2 - 6 pm, Thursday noon - 6 pm, and Saturday 9 am - noon. Curbside library service is still available during regular library hours.

Special Programming - Solar Eclipse Activities

Join us for special programming leading up to the total solar eclipse on April 8! All participants will receive a free pair of eclipse viewing glasses. Additionally, viewing glasses will be available to the public free of charge on a first come, first served basis starting on Monday, March 4, during regular library hours. Glasses are limited to 1 pair per household member.

Family Program - Exploring Earth: Bear's Shadow & Make Your Own Moon Journals - Saturday, March 30 - 10:30 am - Noon - Ages 3 & Up - Join Betty Jones and Amanda Otto for this hands-on activity designed by NASA for younger visitors and their caregivers. Participants move a flashlight around an object to make and experiment with shadows. Stay after to create your own moon journals to encourage observations of the moon and sky leading up to the eclipse.

Youth Program - Pinhole Projectors with Amanda Otto - Wednesday, April 3 - 2:30 - 4:00 pm - Ages 8 & Up - Join Amanda Otto and Paul Wade to create your own personalized pinhole projector that lets you watch the solar eclipse safely and easily from anywhere. All materials provided - preregistration is appreciated.

All Ages Program - Eclipses in Art - March 18 - April 22 - Throughout history, people have made art to try to make sense of this unexpected and mysterious natural phenomenon. Come to the Cabot Public Library to view a selection of printed images that show how different cultures presented and interpreted the solar eclipse in art. **Come back to the library the week of April 8 to create your own piece of art inspired by this once in a lifetime event!** An assortment of 2-D media will be available.

Youth Programming - Be sure to visit our website: cabotlibrary.com and check FPF for updates, registration information and added programming.

Dungeons and Dragons (ages 9 - 13) - **Ongoing - Tuesdays, 3:30 - 5:00 pm -** Join Losada Stoddard as DM for our newest D&D campaign. Learn how to build a Dungeons and Dragons character, and then set out on your Adventures. No experience necessary! Come for the mysteries and magic, tails and talons, puzzles, and prophecies! Snacks provided. New members are welcome anytime!

Story and Activity Time (ages birth - 5) - **Wednesdays 10:30 - 11:30 am -** 3rd Floor of the Willey Building Join youth librarian Amanda Otto for stories, songs, snacks, crafts and open play. All are welcome!

Teen Game Night & Food (ages 12-18) - **Thursday, March 21st - 6:00 - 7:30 pm -** Come play classic and new board and card games. Bring your friends or come solo and make some new ones. From 6 - 6:30 PM we'll make some sim-

ple and tasty snacks (savory and sweet popcorn, tortilla pizzas, etc.) together in the kitchen. Games start promptly at 6:30 PM!

If you have a skill that you would like to share with the community or have an idea for an upcoming program, please contact us.

Adult/Family Programming

Darning & Patch-Mending Gathering - Sunday, March 10 - 1-3 pm -

Whether you're a visible-mending newbie or have been repairing your clothes for years, come join us at The Cabot Public Library for an afternoon of mending and connecting with your neighbors. Just bring your clothes in need of fixing, and we'll supply instructions and materials. Tea and snacks will be provided!

Make the Most of your Garden Space - Wednesday, March 13 - 7 pm

And have a constant supply of fresh vegetables. Join Anne Miller for a talk about succession planting, multi-level planting, diverse and companion planting, why to plant in rows, beds, or hills, and look at some practices of gardeners from other places and times. All are welcome!

Cabot Book Group - Thursday, March 28 - 2 pm

This month's selection is **Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Shelby Van Pelt. "...a charming, witty and compulsively readable exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope that traces a widow's unlikely connection with a giant Pacific octopus." Books will be available at the Cabot library - all are welcome!

Yoga for Everybody! Sundays 10:30 - 11:45 am

Seize the potency of a fresh year by making a commitment to your vitality with a weekly practice of yoga! Classes are a playful invitation to meet yourself while gaining strength, flexibility, balance, alignment, and attunement to the rhythm of your breath. All are welcome, beginners especially encouraged. Mats and props provided. Donation-based (\$10 suggested). Sundays at the Willey building, ongoing 10:30 - 11:45 am.

Many thanks to Christina Sacalis and Amanda Otto for the Darning and Patch Mending workshop and to Christyn King for weekly Yoga sessions. Thanks also to the Library Trustees and Student Representative for their dedication and hard work: Grace Hoffman, Niall McCallum, Angela Ogle, Kurt Steinert and Erin Ruddell and our student representative, Ila Steinert.

See you at the library!
Kathleen Hoyne - Library Director
Amanda Otto - Youth Librarian



March 10, 2024 at 2:00 a.m.

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**Neighbors
in Action**

CABOT

MARCH Calendar

FREE Food Share Distribution

Wednesdays: March 13th & 27th

from 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Other Events at Neighbors in Action:

BINGO is BACK: Thursdays in March

Doors open at 5:00 - Bingo begins at 6:00

Community Supper: Live Music! Donations Welcome!

Saturday, March 16th from 4:30 - 6:30 pm

Senior Adventures: Tuesdays, March 12th & 26th

from 10:00 - 1:00

3339 Main Street

Downtown Cabot Village

NeighborsinActionVT.org

Twinfield-Cabot Varsity Basketball Senior Night February 16



Cabot's one senior on the team, Dominic Hale, in action.



Cabot Sophomores Sam Churchill and Ben Monaco are also on the team. BFA Fairfax won 48-39. Photos by Brittany Butler.

Cabot Student Honors

by Beth Hoffman

Camryn Hoffman and Silas Robbins have both been named to the Community College of Vermont (CCV) fall 2023 President's List (earning a 4.0 GPA). Both Silas and Camryn are seniors at the Cabot School, taking advantage of the dual enrollment program by attending CCV full time. This program allows students to attend college during their

senior year of high school and use the college credits to also fulfill their high school graduation requirements at the same time.

Abigail Scribner was named to the CCV Dean's list (earning a 3.5 - 3.99 GPA) for the fall 2023 semester. Abigail is a 2023 Cabot High School graduate who also participated in the dual enrollment program during her senior year.

March Community Contra Dance

by Karen Mueller-Harder

Shake off the cold weather by coming to the Cabot Community Contra Dance on Friday, March 8, featuring the energetic calling of Erin Smith! The dance takes place in the wonderful third floor space in the Willey Building (Cabot Town Hall, 3084 Main Street), from 7:30-10 pm, with a short intro session for new folks at 7:15. Live music is provided by a great group of local musicians--feel free to just come and listen if you prefer!

All dances are taught, and don't require any special skills or level of coordination. Everyone is welcome, and anyone can dance with anyone (the dances don't rely on gender), generally changing partners with each dance. You can come to the dance alone, with a friend or sweetheart, or your whole family!

Admission is on a sliding scale, \$5-10 suggested, but nobody is turned away. Masks are welcomed but not required, and we'll provide water and a delightful evening! Hope to see you at the dance!

Trails Committee Receives Flood Recovery Grant

by Gary Gulka

The Trails Committee was notified by VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation (FPR) that it has been awarded a \$75,000 grant to repair flood damage that occurred this past July to the Cabot Trails Network. The grant funds will be used to repair damaged and washed-out culverts on Langone Trail and Talbert Farm Trails as well as to repair erosion damage on these two trails. Work will begin this spring.

The Trails Committee currently has another grant with FPR to build out new trails, including the Burt Orchard Trail, improve trailhead parking, and add informational kiosks and other trail amenities throughout the trail network. This work will also be ongoing this spring and fall and will continue into 2025. If you are interested in volunteering time as a trail steward to assist with trail building or maintenance, please contact us at: lori.cabottrails@gmail.com.



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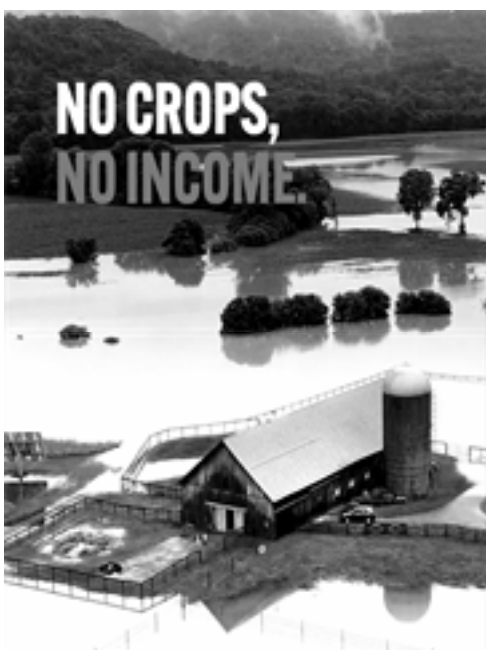
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