

The *Brandon • Pittsford • Proctor • West Rutland • Lake Dunmore • Leicester • Whiting • Sudbury • Goshen*
REPORTER

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\$1



THE ART OF SAMPLERS

The Pittsford Historical Society delves into the history behind two examples of this traditional women's craft, joining the national movement to document the art form.

PG. 3



OLD STORY, TOLD ANEW

"A Christmas Carol" will get a creative remake this weekend by the Rutland-based One Room Theatrics.

PG. 3

BARN OPERA AT BRANDON INN

Don't miss BARN Opera's free holiday concert at the Brandon Inn on Dec. 14.

PG. 4



PG. 10



Pittsford SB talks Syndicate Rd, CEDRR, and appraisals

BY STEVEN JUPITER

PITTSFORD—The Pittsford Selectboard convened for its regular meeting on Wednesday, December 4. **SYNDICATE ROAD**

A contingent of Brandon residents were in attendance to discuss Brandon's proposed closure of Syndicate Road (known as Carver Street when it crosses into Brandon). The Brandon town management team had proposed closing the road to vehicular traffic in order to cut down on illegal dumping along the roadside and
(See Pittsford SB, Page 15)

Brandon SB tackles health insurance, boundary lines, and chemtrails

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Brandon Selectboard convened for its regular meeting on Monday evening. Town Manager's report
 Town Manager Seth Hopkins presented his report to the Board. Highlights from the report included:

A Brandon police officer was injured while responding to a car fire on Franklin Street. A car had crashed and was engulfed in flames. The officer was injured when one of the tires exploded. Mr. Hopkins stated that the officer received medical care and has been cleared to return to work.

The union that represents Brandon police officers rejected the town's request to switch health-insurance providers from Blue Cross/Blue Shield to MVP. The switch would have saved both the officers and the town money
(See Brandon SB, Page 19)



GENE CHILDERS CONDUCTS the Brandon Festival Singers in their 42nd annual holiday concert at the Brandon Congregational Church on Sunday. The singers sounded terrific as they performed an eclectic mix of familiar classics and lesser-known gems picked by Mr. Childers. Photos by Steven Jupiter

Brandon Festival Singers ring in the holiday season with 42nd annual concert

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—The Brandon Festival Singers performed their 42nd annual holiday concert to a packed house at the Brandon Congregational Church on Sunday, December 8. The concert has become a beloved holiday tradition for many in the area.

The concert series has been

led for its duration by Gene Childers, with his wife, Jean, on piano. Mr. Childers chooses the pieces thoughtfully, varying his selections so that no concert is the same as any previous. He includes classics in both familiar and unconventional arrangements, modern pieces, songs from international traditions,

and even his own compositions. It always makes for a lovely and unpredictable program.

This year's chorus was composed of sopranos Anna de Boer, Jean Butler, Hilary Collier, Teena Foster, and Barbara White; altos Cristy Harding, Ellen Knapp, Sue Wetmore, Kris-
(See Brandon Festival Singers, Page 14)

Car break-ins plague area

BY STEVEN JUPITER

For the last several weeks, residents in the Brandon-Pittsford area have been taking to Facebook and Front Porch Forum to note that their cars had been broken into at their homes. No neighborhood seemed to be exempt, from densely populated streets in the hearts of the villages to homes on more isolated roads.

Most of the affected vehicles

had been left unlocked in their owners' driveways. So far there have not been reports of windows being smashed or locks jimmied.

Most of the break-ins did not result in significant monetary loss, but a firearm was stolen from a vehicle on Union Street in Brandon.

Recent snowfall has made the thieves' nocturnal itineraries visually obvious, as people have

observed footprints in the snow approaching their cars and then heading off in search of others.

Some area residents were able to capture footage of the thieves on home-security cameras, but so far no identifications have been made.

Brandon Police Chief David Kachajian has warned residents to keep their cars locked, especially at night, and to remove all valuables.

Pittsford Historical Society presents an old craft form: **Samplers**

BY STEPHEN BELCHER

Two hundred years ago, it was usual for young women to craft a piece of stitchery, embroidering a small piece of cloth with alphabets and numbers, perhaps in different styles, perhaps also with a verse and also design elements. They were usually signed and dated. It was something of a rite of passage and a demonstration of sewing skills at a time when many pieces of clothing were still hand-made at home.

There is now a national movement to document these examples of women's art, with an active Vermont chapter (contact: Samplersvt@gmail.com or www.samplerarchive.org) They recently held an event in Essex Junction to record samplers.

The Pittsford Historical Society recently received two samplers, donated by a local household. We've had fun trying to determine who made them and how they ended up in Pittsford. They offered different challenges. One was a standard sampler, with alphabet, but no name: only the initials HS and the date 1804.

The second was less a sampler than an embroidered thank-you note from one Christeen Baker

at the Mayhew School in the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi, addressed to a Mrs. Hammond

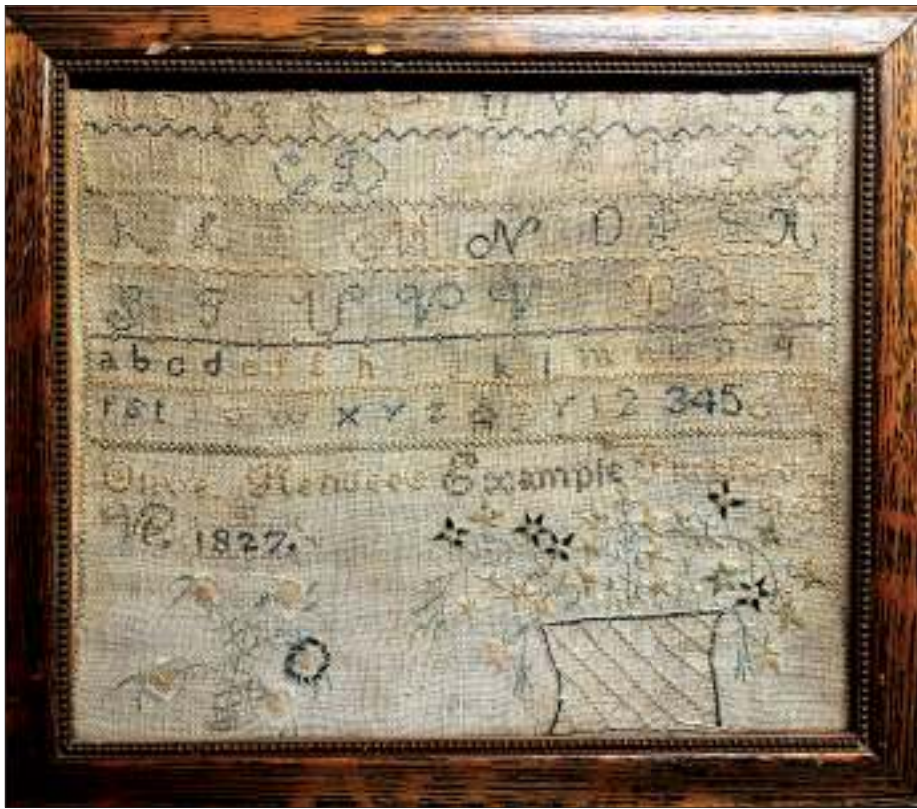
and dated 1830. There are other known examples of Christeen Baker's work at the Colonial

Williamsburg Museum and other places.

The connecting thread in Pittsford ran through the Bogue family. The donor's grandmother was Elizabeth Stewart Bogue (1882-1926), who married a Henry Stimson in Pittsford in 1907 (they then lived in Maplewood, NJ, fairly close to the Belchers: a Pittsford colony). Elizabeth herself was born in Nebraska: her father, Willard Child Bogue, eloped with Annie Mathews and raised his family there. Eliza-

beth and her sister Anne came back to Pittsford in 1890 after their mother died and lived with their aunts Sarah and Jane. The aunts had moved from the Bogue farm to the Village Green, and then with a bequest from a brother who had made money in iron in NY, they built a house on Elm St.

Willard's father was Thomas Fitch Bogue, the first of the family to spell his name that way (it was Booge before). In 1819, he married Elizabeth Stewart of Connecticut, who thus became Elizabeth Stewart Bogue. It should be noted that many of the early settlers of Pittsford came from Connecticut and maintained family ties. Elizabeth Stewart had an older sister, Henrietta, who died in 1814; here, it seems likely, we have the HS of the regular sampler. One sister dies, the other preserves a memento. But there is an alternate path, although both lead back to Elizabeth. Elizabeth was the child of Philo Stewart and Sarah Penfield Stewart (the Penfield name became connected with Pittsford). After Philo's death, (See *Pittsford Samplers*, Page 7)



1827 SAMPLER BY Olive Hendee of Pittsford, by permission of Michele Pagan. This is one of two 19th-century samplers recently donated to the Pittsford Historical Society. Samplers showed off a young woman's skill with needle and thread and were a common endeavor in the early decades of the United States.

A NEW TWIST ON 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' COMES TO BRANDON THIS WEEKEND

BY STEVEN JUPITER

BRANDON—Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" is a beloved holiday classic, but we've all seen or read it a thousand times. While the play's message of redemption remains as powerful as ever, our familiarity with the piece may dampen our enthusiasm to run out to see it again this year.

Bah, humbug!

This weekend, a new twist on the classic will be performed by Rutland-based One Room Theatrics (ORT) in Brandon, Rutland, and Poultney. Instead of a conventional presentation of the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and his transformation from miserly to generous, ORT will present a "play within a play": ORT's actors will play actors putting on a 1940s radio play of the Christmas classic. The piece is called "A Christmas Carol: The Radio Show" and was adapted from Dickens' original by Joe Landry.

The 5 performing members of the ORT company will be dressed in 1940s period costume and will be playing multiple characters, both as 1940s radio actors and as the characters they

portray in the radio broadcast of "A Christmas Carol." David Kiefner, for example, will be playing 1940s actor Freddie Filmore who in turn is playing both Scrooge and Santa.

Now, those who remember "A Christmas Carol" will wonder where Santa figures into all this, since he doesn't appear in the Dickens original. Another fun twist to this production is that the performance of "A Christmas Carol" will be punctuated by commercial breaks just as radio broadcasts were back in the day. So, the actors will need to abandon their Dickens characters to become new characters in commercials for the radio show's on-air sponsors.

This will require the actors to put extra effort into creating unique vocal profiles for each of their characters, just as radio actors would have had to do in the 1940s.

"We have 5 actors playing 41 characters," said Martin VanBuren III, who is directing this production for ORT. "We really have to dig into the characters. We wanted to make sure that if we closed our eyes, we could

hear the differences among the characters, even if they were being played by the same actors."

"It's exciting for the cast members," he added.

Mr. Kiefner has done extensive work narrating audiobooks, where he needed to create distinctive vocal profiles for multiple characters.

"Everyone has to come up with different voices for every character," said Kiefner. And the relatively confined stage-work—the show takes place in a radio recording studio—means that the actors need to use their voices especially well in order to keep the audience's attention.

"Our voices need to express emotion and shades of meaning," he said.

Kiefner will have to rely on his voice alone to convey Scrooge's transformation from bitter to warm, since none of the usual visual signals will be available to him as a "radio performer."

"At the beginning, he's a miserly old jerk," he laughed. "But at the end he's had his epiphany and is dancing around. It's really the middle phase that will be the toughest. I want to show that

he's having small revelations but still clinging to his past ways."

"The actors need to be animated, expressive, and emotive," said VanBuren. "There will also be a mix of pre-recorded and live sound effects."

And while "A Christmas Car-

ol" isn't normally thought of as comedy, the play-within-a-play format of Landry's adaptation gives the performers windows for humor that wouldn't otherwise exist in the production.

"There aren't many comedic (See *Radio play*, Page 6)

Spotlight On Business NAYLOR & BREEN BUILDERS



Brandon.org for more info

Locally owned and operated since 1978, Naylor & Breen has realized continued success by focusing on our employees, strong client and industry relations, quality work, and being an active member of our Vermont Community.

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Smith Block, Neshobe School, OVUH'S Field Lighting Project and many more.

Brandon's a great place to live, work, and raise a family. We're proud to be part of the fabric of our community.

NOTICE: HOLIDAY SCHEDULE CHANGE

Because of the coincidence of both Christmas and New Year's Day with our usual press days this year, we will not be able to publish on our usual schedule. Neither our printing press nor the U.S. Postal Service will be open on our usual printing/mailling days. As a result, our last issue of 2024 will be published on 12/18 and our first issue of 2025 will be published on 1/8. We normally don't publish the last week of December, so this change skips an additional week. We will add a week to all subscriptions to make up for this. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

THE REPORTER TEAM

Sanders, Welch and Balint seek reversal of decision to cut hours at Vermont border crossings

BY SARAH MEARHOFF/VT-DIGGER

Vermont's congressional delegation is sounding the alarm as U.S. Customs and Border Protection plans to reduce the hours of operation for numerous border crossing stations along the U.S.-Canada border in Vermont.

The federal agency announced on Nov. 20 that it would reduce the hours of operation of 38 ports of entry along the Canadian border across the U.S. beginning in the new year, including four located in Vermont. At two additional ports of entry in the state, the agency plans to make permanent already shortened hours, which were implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a letter sent to Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Troy Miller on Wednesday, all three members of Vermont's congressional delegation — U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and

Peter Welch, D-Vt., as well as U.S. Rep. Becca Balint, D-Vt. — urged the agency to reverse course.

"This decision is of great concern to our constituents in border communities and surrounding areas, as it negatively affects public safety, the local economy, and the availability of workers in critical industries," the delegation wrote.

In fact, they wrote, the agency's decision directly contradicts the delegation's request in December of 2022 to increase the hours of operation at Vermont's ports of entry.

Four of the land ports slated to see their hours reduced — in Canaan, North Troy, West Berkshire and Alburgh (on Route 225) — are currently open 24 hours a day. But CBP has proposed they only be open for 12 hours, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Should CBP's recommendations take effect, that would leave *(See Border crossings, Page 9)*



Here, there, and everywhere

I FOUND THIS Great Horned Owl resting. It is the largest North American owl by weight and is widespread across the continent.

Photo by Sue Wetmore

The REPORTER

The Reporter is a 501c3 nonprofit, community-supported newspaper managed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Current board members are Steven Jupiter, president; Dr. George Fjeld, treasurer; Barbara Ebling, secretary; Mitchell Pearl; Shelly Williams.

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Community Forums VT F&W has online license gift certificates

MONTPELIER—Finding a gift that will continue to give for a full year is a challenge, but the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has a solution on their website—a license gift certificate for hunting and fishing licenses.

"It's a perfect gift for a friend or family member who hunts or fish-

es," said Fish and Wildlife's Director of Outreach Alison Thomas. "You can go to our website, fill out the gift certificate and pay for it online, and then print the certificate to present to your recipient."

The license section of Fish and Wildlife's website has a link to the gift certificate. The person who

receives the certificate must go to the website to redeem their certificate and purchase their licenses.

"If you have a friend or relative who hunts or fishes, this is an easy gift-giving solution," said Thomas. "The gift certificate will cover licenses for 2025 or for licenses in future years."

Register for the 2025 UVM Extension Master Gardener Course

Registration is now open for the 2025 UVM Extension Master Gardener course, a comprehensive gardening course that

covers basic botany; vegetable, fruit, and ornamental gardening; integrated pest management of insects and diseases; soil fertil-

ity; tree care; pollinator plants; sustainable landscaping; and more. Two tracks are available:

(See Master Gardener, Page 6)

Free BARN Opera Holiday Concert on 14th

The holiday season is in full swing, and what better way to celebrate than with a cozy, joyful, pre-dinner moment of live

music in the heart of Vermont? Join us for "Christmas Inn Vermont", a festive, informal hour of holiday favorites, on Satur-

day, December 14th, 2024, from 5:30–6:30 p.m. in the Ballroom of the historic Brandon Inn.

(See BARN Opera, Page 6)

Letters to the Editor

'Wicked' is about more than just witches & monkeys

The movie "Wicked" was a creative, insightful, and feel-good movie for me. The Green witch, Elphaba, is the main character and the most disliked by others because of the color of her skin. It is green! Glinda, a beauty queen, who sees life as a popularity contest, is the only one who befriends her. Later, Elphaba meets Oz, an opportunity she has waited for forever. Oz turns out to be a braggart in love with himself. He tells her of his plan to set the monkeys up as enemies of the kingdom. This would cause the community to fear them

and hunt them down. Oz would be given the credit for getting rid of them and he would be seen as the great Wizard of Oz, protector of the kingdom. A sneaky plan indeed that even Oz's friends would not realize that he was a coward who cared nothing about anyone other than himself and would support the community in preying on innocent monkeys only to make himself look great. Elphaba does her best to thwart his plans and attempts to gain Glinda's support, who only wants to be popular. Elphaba regrouped, calls out the Wizard

of Oz for being the coward that he is and prepares to defend herself. Hearing this, the community sees Oz for the coward that he is. I came away knowing that a good leader listens to others, responds to their needs, and does not take credit for what others do, nor blame others for things they do wrong themselves. Wicked turned out to be a movie about people, relationships, and character for me as much as it was about witches and monkeys.

Sandy Mayo
Brandon

Brandon's Biggest Tree Contest has two winners!

The Brandon Biggest Tree Contest ended on Thanksgiving. We received a total of 17 entries, including two that were not in the Brandon/Forest Dale limits and had to be excluded. Everyone's entries were wonderful and very competitive. The Brandon Tree Group reviewed all of the entries and determined that there were two winners, one the largest maple entry and one the largest oak entry.

The largest entry in the maple class was Jacki Barchanowicz, whose tree measures 220 inches in circumference. Very impressive. And in the oak class, there

were a couple of entries for a tree in Hawk Hill Trails. However, one entry was excluded because the entry was incomplete. The other entry, measuring a whopping 276 inches around, was submitted by Marianne Buswell.

The Brandon Tree Group will be holding an award ceremony (with prizes) in mid-January, date to be announced. I'll make an announcement when we have more details.

As usual, contact me with questions or concerns. Thanks!

Neil Silins
Brandon Tree Warden



Leicester News

The Leicester Historical Society is sponsoring Prize Bingo and the Memory Tree will be lit on December 21st.

The Leicester Historical Society is sponsoring Prize Bingo on Saturday, Dec 14, at 1:00 pm at the Senior Center at the Four Corners. Refreshments served and all are welcome. Prize Bingo will be on break after Dec 14, until April.

The Leicester Historical Society is once again sponsoring the Memory Tree at the Four Corners. Names can be submitted for the Memory Tree by sending names and money to Diane Benware at 1594 Old Jerusalem Road, Salisbury, VT 05769. The cost is \$1.00 per name or six names for \$5.00. The tree will be lit on Saturday, Dec 21 at 5:00 p.m.



Like all things vintage?

Mim's Photos

are on page 16!



'tis the season TO Shop local & WIN BIG

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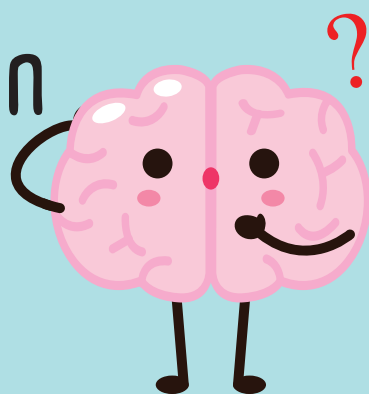
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Brandon Brain Buster



Anna and Bobby stand back-to-back on a circular racetrack. Anna can walk the entire length of the racetrack in 15 minutes. Bobby can walk the entire length of the racetrack in 12 minutes. At the same moment, Anna and Bobby start walking on the racetrack in opposite directions at their usual speeds. If Bobby stops walking after 10 minutes while Anna

continues in her original direction, what fraction of the track's total length would Anna have to walk to meet Bobby where he is?

- A) 1/6
- B) 1/3
- C) 1/2
- D) 2/3
- E) 5/6

Answer on pg. 9

BARN Opera

(Continued from Page 4)

This spirited evening features acclaimed tenor and Opera Vermont Artistic Director Joshua Collier, joined by a stellar ensemble of some of Vermont's finest musicians: Tim Guiles on piano, Glendon Ingalls on bass, and Ross Edmunds on drums. Together, they'll bring the warmth and magic of the season to life with beloved holiday classics, timeless carols, and

perhaps a few surprises.

The intimate setting of the Brandon Inn provides the perfect backdrop for this merry gathering, where friends, family, and neighbors can come together to share in the joy of the season. Whether you're a fan of opera, jazz, or simply love holiday music, this performance promises to be a highlight of your December festivities.

Admission is free as a gift to

the community, and all are welcome, but if you feel like supporting and thanking the artists, there will be a collection taken after the performance to be divided equally among them. So grab a cup of cocoa (or something more festive at the bar!), gather your loved ones, and join us for a wonderful evening of music, laughter, and holiday cheer!

Master Gardener

(Continued from Page 4)

Track 1 for those who'd like to become certified UVM Extension Master Gardener Volunteers with a 40-hour internship requirement and Track 2 for non-residents and Vermont gardeners interested in home horticulture study without certification. The online course opens on January 23, 2025 and runs for 16 weeks; students have online access to materials through May 29. Track 1 students participate in live Zoom sessions

on Wednesdays from 6 to 7:30 p.m. from Jan 29 to May 14. Register no later than Jan 17; the registration fee is \$400 for Vermonters and \$550 for non-residents. Vermonters can apply for scholarships, VSAC, and AmeriCorps awards until December 13. To learn more and register, visit <http://go.uvm.edu/mastergardener>.

Five (5) partial scholarships of \$250 per person are open to Rutland County residents interested in pursuing Track 1 (vol-

unteer track) of the 2025 Extension Master Gardener course. Applications are due by no later than 5:00 pm E.T. on Friday, December 13, 2024.

This scholarship program has been funded and organized by volunteers of the Rutland County Chapter of the Extension Master Gardener Program. <https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Extension-Community-Horticulture/Courses/2025EMGRutlandChapterScholarshipApplication.pdf>

Radio play

(Continued from Page 3)

opportunities in the original," said VanBuren. "This version leans heavily into comedy during the 'commercial breaks.' The cast has as much fun with it as the audience. I want to make sure everyone is having a blast."

One Room Theatrics will perform "A Christmas Carol: The Radio Show" at Stone Valley Arts in Poultney on Friday, Dec. 13 at 7 p.m.; at the Chaffee Art Center in Rutland on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 7 p.m.; and at the Lilac Inn in Brandon on Sunday, Dec. 15 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased online through the Paramount Theatre (paramountvt.org) or at the door.

The Lilac Inn in Brandon is an unconventional venue for a theater production, but the antique feel of the building will suit the vintage setting of the radio play.

"This is a charming take on a family favorite," said VanBuren, noting that the show is totally suitable for children. He added that ORT, which was founded at the beginning of 2024, is eager to create its own annual Christmas traditions and that he hopes to write a holiday piece of his own for ORT to perform every year.

"We don't want to do the same things everyone else is doing,"

he said.

No worries about that!

So, for anyone interested in a different take on a familiar holiday favorite, check out "A

Christmas Carol: The Radio Show" this weekend.

Learn more about One Room Theatrics at oneroomtheatrics.com.

Visit our website

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Jim & Liz McRae

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Crossword & Sudoku on page 17

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Lucy Truants	Sally Applegate
Kristina	Anna Fitzgerald

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at www.paramountvt.org

Pittsford Samplers

(Continued from Page 3)

Sarah seems to have moved to Pittsford to live with her daughter (and did she bring her daughter's sampler with her?); there, she met Thomas Hammond—a noteworthy figure in early Pittsford history—whose wife Hannah had died in 1819. They married. So here we have a Mrs. Hammond who might have been sent a token of thanks in 1830. Caverly's account of Thomas Hammond cites in particular his piety and good works.

There is an alternate candidate, proposed by one of the sampler specialists: Louisa Chatterdon Hammond, who married German Hammond, son of Thomas, in 1820, and became active in missionary affairs. But they apparently lived in Brandon, and both of them died in Wisconsin. There is little record of their activities in Pittsford (German was a State Representative in 1828).

An incomplete exploration of newspaper records relating to Pittsford missionary activity, the family names, and the Choctaw failed to turn up a smoking gun. Caverly's account of church activities in Pittsford mentions no missionary action (he's also very weak on recognizing wives and their contributions). But in 1830, the Choctaw were very much in the news, including Vermont newspapers: they were settling disputes with the Chickasaw and preparing a treaty

with the US government. It is sad to note that in 1831 the Choctaw were expelled from their lands in Mississippi and nearby states and sent on the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma (there are still Choctaw in Mississippi).

So we have no direct evidence to link Sarah Penfield Stewart Hammond with the Mrs. Hammond named by Christeen Baker, save the simple fact that both samplers were passed down in Pittsford together and the simplest link seems to be through the Stewart women.

We have since learned of another sampler that was made in Pittsford by Olive Hendee in 1827. It was acquired by a local textile specialist. Looking into the provenance of this sampler offered a different sort of problem: there were two Olive Hendees at that time, both granddaughters of Caleb Hendee, one of Pittsford's founding settlers. One, born in 1814, married a Josiah Leonard in 1836; a second, born in 1815, married a Roswell Woodcock in 1839. The Pittsford Historical Society has no records of the Woodcock family after the 1950s; the Leonard family, by contrast, continued strong and numerous until recent times. Shirley Leonard, widow of Elwin (who stands out in the list of Pittsford veterans), passed away in 2023. All their children lived out of



AN 1804 SAMPLER attributed to Henrietta Stewart. Pittsford Historical Society.

state (per the records in Pittsford's Second Century): by inference, the household was emptied and the sampler went on the market.

But the pattern is clear: houses get emptied, and the traces of history disperse. It would be nice to see greater

appreciation of the value of some of the relics. Samplers count large in possibilities: they were often framed to be preserved, and they document the past activity of women in the family. And they should be registered with the Sampler Project.



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For all membership inquiries please visit the Membership Page on our website!

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We are currently seeking a skilled and dedicated Cook to join our culinary team at Neshobe Golf Club. The ideal candidate will have a passion for creating delicious and visually appealing dishes while ensuring a high standard of food quality and safety.

Bartender

We're currently searching for a skilled and enthusiastic bartender to join our team. If you have a passion for creating great drinks and providing excellent customer service, we want to hear from you.

The golf course is OPEN!
Tee times available from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
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The Memory Tree in Sudbury was lit on a beautiful snowy night



RESIDENTS OF SUD-BURY gathered in front of the Sudbury Meetinghouse on Sunday to illuminate the Memory Tree. The tree honors family and friends who have passed. It's a beautiful tradition that carries a lot of meaning for a community.

Photos by Fiona Slattery

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Border crossings

(Continued from Page 4)

Vermont with only six 24-hour ports of entry along its northern border.

“This significant reduction in hours will increase border wait times and burden cross-border workers and employers,” Sanders, Welch and Balint wrote. “Specifically, the late hour of opening time of these ports, at 8:00 AM, substantially restricts the ability of workers to cross the border in time for work.”

Affected workers in the region include those employed by North Country Hospital, located in Newport — a town “literally situated on the Canadian border,” according to North Country’s CEO, Thomas Frank. In a written statement provided by Welch’s office, Frank noted the hospital “is the northernmost hospital and the most rural hospital in the state of Vermont.”

Many of the hospital’s employees are residents of Quebec and regularly cross the border to get to and from work — and “like all hospitals we are a 365/24-hour business,” Frank said.

“With limited crossing hours, many of our valued and uniquely qualified providers from north of the (border) would no longer

be able to work at our hospital,” Frank added. “With our rural location, it would be impossible for us to replace those talented folks with Vermont residents. Patient care would suffer tremendously under these new border crossing hours.”

Jay Peak Resort, located in Jay, would also see detrimental impacts due to the reduced hours, according to the resort’s president and general manager, Steven Wright. The resort relies on “a consistent flow of cross-border traffic for both staff members and our guests,” Wright said in a statement provided by Welch’s office.

Canadian visitors account for more than half of the resort’s overall gross revenue, according to Wright, making their business “vital” to the resort’s bottom line. Should the proposed hour reductions take effect, he said, the changes “would force us to cut staffing hours and negatively impact our bottom line.”

“These proposed hours virtually eliminate the ability for our overnight and evening staff to do their jobs and will force thousands of Canadian guests to reduce or eliminate stays here at the mountain,” Wright added. “As an employer of more than 1,500 Vermonters, we

understand budget and operating challenges — but returning North Troy Port hours to pandemic-era scenarios will create more problems than it tries to solve.”

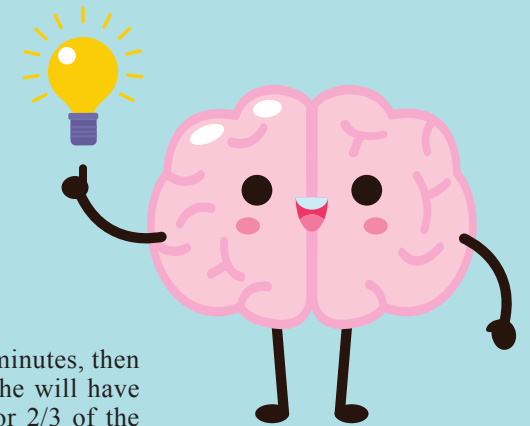
The delegation also noted in its letter that the Infrastructure

Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 allocated \$3.4 billion for modernization of 26 land ports of entry nationwide, including five in Vermont. One of those locations that saw a major investment, Alburgh, is now slated to see service reduc-

tions.

Vermont’s members of Congress concluded their letter urging CBP to “take immediate action to reverse your November 20th decision and return all facilities in Vermont to pre-pandemic hours.”

Brandon Brain Buster Answered



Answer: C

If Bobby can walk the entire length of the track in 12 minutes, then in 10 minutes (when he stops walking) he will have covered 10/12 or 5/6 of the total distance. This means there remains 1/6 of the total distance between where Bobby stops and where he began. If Anna can walk the entire length of

the track in 15 minutes, then in 10 minutes she will have covered 10/15 or 2/3 of the total distance. This means that there remains 1/3 of the total distance between Anna and her starting point at the moment when Bobby stops walking. In order to meet Bobby *where he is after he stops*, Anna must complete the 1/3 and then complete the 1/6 that remains be-

tween the starting point and Bobby’s stopping point. So, Anna would have to walk $1/3 + 1/6$ of the total distance to reach Bobby where he stops. $1/3 + 1/6 = 2/6 + 1/6 = 3/6 = 1/2$.

The answer is C.

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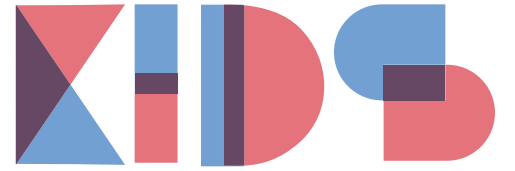
Income-eligible Vermonters may also qualify for free weatherization services.

*Subject to availability and eligibility.



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OUR CREATIVE



STUDENT: Zaidyn McGraw

GRADE: 4

SCHOOL: Neshobe North Campus

MEDIUM: Colored pencils

TEACHER: Ms Hayes



Our Creative Kids Poetry Corner Where I'm From

by **Xavier**
5th grade class at
Otter Creek Academy

I am from a Ripstick,
from a bike and a 4-wheeler.

I am from the
pavement on the road.

I am from camping -
the rivers,
and the fire.

I'm from chicken nuggets and french fries,
from ketchup and BBQ sauce.

I'm from the fridge
and the oven,
from salt and pepper.

I'm from the kitchen
and the table.

I'm from Brawl Stars and Fortnite,
and Call of Duty.

I am from playing with Dexter and Isaac.

MAPLE the COW™ by Matt Aucoin



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LAST MINUTE SHOPPING DEALS AT WIMETT'S!



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Superduty XTD Cab 4X4, XL package, 91k miles
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2012 HYUNDAI ACCENT
GLS, Auto, FWD, 135k miles
\$6,995



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\$13,995



2016 TOYOTA TUNDRA
DB Cab SR5 4X4, TRD, 5.7 V8 94k miles
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WE NEED U

Calendar of events

December

Mondays

Brandon Rec offers Aikido classes

Aikido with Brandon Rec -- Aikido classes for Youth (4:30) and Adults (5:30) at Brandon's Town Hall main floor. Beginners and Spectators always welcome! For more information, visit www.AikidoVermont.org

Tuesdays

Maclure Library Story Time Playgroup

Looking for a fun, educational playgroup for your 2–5 year old? Look no further! From 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. join Miss Allie, a certified teacher, for a weekly FREE literacy-based playgroup. Light snacks will be provided, along



with stories, crafts, songs, games, and more. To register, please email allie.griffiths@rcpcc.org with your child's name, age, and contact information for your family.

Friends Zone

Need a safe space to socialize? Come join us at the Friends Zone. Open Tues-

days 12–3 pm at the Brandon United Methodist Church, 1 Franklin Street, Brandon. Meet with old friends and make new ones. Play cards, cribbage, or Yahtzee. Put a puzzle together or bring your arts, crafts, and hobbies to work on. Snacks and beverages provided. All are welcome to attend.

For more information contact pastor Vicki Disorda (vqueenoftheearth@gmail.com or (802) 345-4125).

Pokémon Club at the Brandon Free Public Library
3–5 pm. Ages 7+.

Magic the Gathering at the Brandon Free Public Library
5–7pm

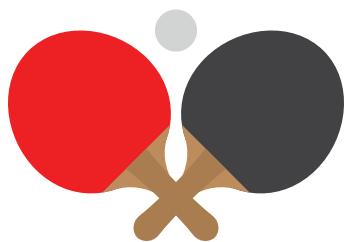
Pins & Needles Craft Club at the Brandon Free Public Library
Drop in from 5:30–7:00 pm, and bring your projects to work on.

Wednesdays

Ping Pong

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

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



If you are interested in table tennis as a recreational or athletic activity, we're interested in you! There is a modest membership fee of only \$30, although you can come twice free as our guest. Bring your sneakers and paddle (or use ours) and have some fun playing a great game of "Pong!"

For further information about the Green Mountain Table Tennis Club, visit our club's website at www.gmttc.com.

Free Drop-In Tech Support at the Brandon Free Public Library
4:30–6 pm

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

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

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

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

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

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

Free drop-in homework help wth Dan for grades K-12!
Wednesdays 3:30–5:00 pm at the Brandon Free Public Library.

Thursdays

Coffee and Cards at the Brandon Free Public Library
2–4 pm. Come play Bridge, Hearts, or other games! Coffee and tea are available.

Ukulele Group

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

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

Open Mic at Red Clover in Brandon

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

Fridays

Chaffee Art Center All About the Arts Free Class

kids 3–5

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

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

pre-register by Wednesday each week.
Instructor: Lori Sullivan; Minimum 3.

Coming to the



Maclure Library Knitting Circle

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

Brandon Senior Center Game Day

Come join us every Friday at 2:00 p.m. Cards, darts, puzzles, board games, coloring.

Corn Hole at the Godnick Adult Center

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

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

Saturdays

Bingo at the Brandon Senior Center

First Saturday of each month from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring lunch, and the Center will provide beverages, desserts, and a good time. A great way to pass a Saturday afternoon. Please direct any questions to Kathy Mathis at 247-3121.

Storytime at the Brandon Free Public Library

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

Sundays

Brandon Town Hall Painting with Crystal

Crystal Ketcham leads an all ages painting event! Yes, you CAN paint! More info, contact Crystal at ceastman88@gmail.com

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

Wednesday 11th

NXT Rockumentary Film Series — Madonna: Truth or Dare (1991)

Impossibly beautiful, incredibly smart, surprisingly candid and fiendishly calculating, the Madonna of Truth or Dare is adept at soaking up every inch of the spotlight. Director Alek Keshishian's documentary about the singer's



Blond Ambition Tour purports to offer a closer look at the Material Girl, but her media sophistication is too formidable, making us always question who's the "real" Madonna: the savvy businesswoman or the needy brat. What's not in dispute, however, is that her eye-popping, ear-candy concert performances slay. — Rolling Stone. 2 hrs. From 7–9 pm at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill, Putney. \$10.

ing & charismatic, connective showmanship. It's easy to see how for over a decade the Kat & Brett Holiday Fête has had audiences singing along, throwing their heads back in knowing laughter, and of course wiping away a sentimental tear or two. From 7–10 pm at Burnham Hall, 52 East River Road, Lincoln. \$35.

Children under 18/Seniors over 65: \$10 + tax/fees.

Saturday 14th

Learn to Crochet — Green Mountain Yarn and Fiber
Join us to learn how to crochet! This class is for complete newbies to crocheting. Participants will begin a simple crochet project in the class to learn basic stitches, terminology, and pattern reading. The cost is \$25 per person, and you will need a size H hook as well as worsted weight yarn for the class. Preregistration is required; register on our website. 11 am–12:30 pm at Green Mountain Yarn and Fiber, 217 Woodstock Avenue, Rutland.



Learn to Spin — Green Mountain Yarn and Fiber
Join Marilyn Brandner, of Mount Nickwackett Sheep Farm and Pride of VT Shepherds, to learn how to spin your own yarn. Spinning wheels and supplies will be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own wheel if you have one. Class is limited to 3 students, so there will be plenty of individualized attention. Cost is \$50 and includes all materials. Preregistration is required. 1–4 pm at Green Mountain Yarn and Fiber, 217 Woodstock Avenue, Rutland.

Saturday 14th Sunday 15th

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily — West Rutland Town Hall Theater

West Rutland's student theater group, WestSide Drama, presents "Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily" by Katie Forgette. This is the new theater group's first full length play and second show ever! This cast and crew are made up of eleven students in grades 5–11.

This case brings the wit of Oscar Wilde to the cunning of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when Wilde brings his dear friend, Lillie Langtry, to Baker Street. Someone has stolen the highly intimate letters Lillie exchanged with the Prince of Wales, and now she is being blackmailed. Only Holmes can solve the case in this mystery comedy. Town Hall Theater, Saturday at 7 pm, and Sunday at 2 pm. \$10.

Sunday 15th

Handel's Messiah — Grace Congregational Church of Rutland

Grace Congregational Church of Rutland presents Messiah: Part 1 and the Hallelujah Chorus by George Frideric Handel at 3:30 and 7:00 pm Sunday the 15th.

The Rutland Area Chorus, Festival Orchestra and guest soloists under the direction of Alastair Stout is an eagerly anticipated and well-attended yearly event. This year's performance features soloists Evangelia Leontis, soprano; Amy Frostman, mezzo soprano; Ryan Mangan, tenor; and David Rugger, bass. Nearly 80 volunteer singers will be part of the Rutland Area Chorus and 20 instrumentalists make up the Grace Festival Orchestra. Also to be performed is the winner of this year's Composition Competition: Be Still by Dale Sakamoto. Be Still is based upon Psalm 46 and takes the listener on a journey from

"an unsettled reverence and instability" resolving to a "joyful reminder that God is always with us" thus restoring feelings of peace and joy. With an

added element of call and response, it serves as "both a meditation and a prayer" making this piece an ideal pairing with Handel's Messiah. A free will offering will be accepted. For more information, visit gracechurchvt.org or call 802-775-4301.

Goings on around town

Three shows: Friday 12/13 @ 7PM, Saturday 12/14 @ 2PM & 7PM. Tickets: Adults: \$15 + tax/fees.

Maclure Library



Thursday 12th

Jingle Bell Shop — Rutland

Get into the holiday spirit! Join us for a special event that brings Downtown Rutland businesses together with beverage and food producers, artists, and activities. You'll have the opportunity to visit almost thirty stops where you can shop, enjoy sales and raffles, sample food and drinks, catch up with friends, and enjoy the festive season together. A great way to shop and support local this holiday season! 5–8 pm. Tickets on sale now at downtownrutland.com/jinglebellshop

The Kat & Brett Holiday Show 2024!

The show (a true Christmas gift!) featuring Tyler Bolles on upright bass and Will Seeders on a variety of instruments offers songs of holiday heartbreak & holiday cheer. It's bejeweled with storytelling, originals, and beloved classics alike. It's guaranteed to warm your heart, pique your nostalgia and create a loving container for those good ol' holiday blues that we all know so well. If the holidays are an opportunity to journey within, Kat & Brett are your ideal, big-hearted guides. Look forward to soaring harmonies, intimate, tender moments, timeless songwrit-

Brass Quintet and Counterpoint — Warren
VSO's annual tour of festive brass and choral music, with a mix of sacred and secular holiday tunes, includes a world-premiere performance from a Music-COMP student, and collaborations with community singers. Conducted by Nathaniel G. Lew. Doors open at 6:30 pm, concert begins at 7 pm. Warren United Church, 339 Main Street, Warren. Note: Admission is free but you must make a reservation to hold your seat.

Friday 13th

Holiday Open House — Rutland Railway Association
The Rutland Railway Association, located at the historic Center Rutland Railroad Station, is having their First Annual Holiday Open House. On the 13th and 20th, from 6–8 pm, the station will welcome visitors to view the museum collection as well as the two operating model railroad layouts.



Friday 13th Saturday 14th

Rutland Free Library Book Sale

Thousands of organized, gently used books, CDs, DVDs and puzzles for all ages.

Always a broad selection of rare and antique books. All purchases by donation only. Limit of two grocery bags per monthly sale per family. Public always welcome. No book dealers.

Proceeds to support library programs and collections and designated library projects.

www.rutlandfree.org. 10 Court St., Rutland. 802-773-1860. Fri., Dec. 13 (10–2) and Sat., Dec. 14 (10–2).

Rutland Youth Theatre presents Elf, Jr.

Rutland Youth Theatre presents Elf, Jr. the Musical! Based on the beloved holiday film, this hilarious fish-out-of-water comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity. Buddy, a young orphan, mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. The would-be elf is raised, unaware that he is actually a human, until his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh reality that his father is on the naughty list and that his half-brother doesn't

even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Brandon Area Food Shelf

The Brandon Area Food Shelf is open Tuesdays 12–3 pm, Sundays 12:30–2 pm, to anyone who needs assistance. Walk-ins are welcome.

We are located at Brandon United Methodist Church, 1 Franklin Street, Brandon, VT

For more information, please call Kathy Mathis (802-247-3121) or Pastor Vicki Disorda (802-345-4125).



Brandon Festival Singers

(Continued from Page 1)

ten Varian, and Terry Zimmer; tenors Jessica Doos, Sue Gage, Phyllis Torrey, Mary Lou Webster, and Trace Worobe; and basses Bernie Carr, Bill Moore, Rick Oberkirch, David Roberts, Frank Spezzano, and Norman Welch.

This year's program included solos from tenor Joshua Collier, flautist Julia Murach, and harpist Margie Bekoff. All performed with a grace and subtlety befitting the music.

Ms. Childers accompanied on piano with versatility and great sensitivity to the music. Her rendition of Silent Night gave the classic a slightly jazzy feel reminiscent of the 1940s. Hillary Knapp

acted as page turner and made sure Ms. Childers was always where she needed to be in the music.

The singers worried about their performances up to the day of, but the ensemble sounded terrific, with a sweet tone and angelic harmonies.

And, of course, Mr. Childers kept the entire program on track, conducting with confidence and clear love for the music.

"It's a joy and a pleasure to sing for all of you," he said at the end of the program. "We hope this is a good part of your holiday season."

Indeed, it is.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Rev. Sara Rossigg of the Brandon Congregational Church stands welcomes the audience to the concert; Director Gene Childers addresses the assembly; Julia Murach on the flute; Tenor Joshua Collier; Jean Childers on the piano with Hillary Knapp (right) turning pages; Kristen Varian, Jean Butler, Teena Foster, Hillary Collier, and Barbara White with Ms. Murach in the background; the soprano section; Margie Bekoff on harp; Anna de Boer and Christy Harding.

Pittsford SB

(Continued from Page 1)
in Otter Creek. The restricted stretch of the road would extend from the bridge to the railroad overpass near the intersection of Carver and Nickerson Road.

The Brandon town management team had proposed the idea directly to Pittsford Town Manager David Atherton, who brought the issue to the attention of the Pittsford Selectboard earlier this fall. While the Brandon Selectboard has already discussed the matter at one of its meetings, Pittsford Selectboard Chair Alicia Malay said on Wednesday that no one from Brandon's Selectboard or town management had yet approached Pittsford directly.

The contingent of Brandon residents had come to Pittsford to dissuade the Pittsford Selectboard from agreeing to the closure. Many of these residents had also voiced their opposition to the plan directly to the Brandon Selectboard at that board's last meeting. Brandon Selectboard Chair Doug Bailey had stated his intention to attend Pittsford's Selectboard meeting but was not present on Wednesday.

The main argument presented to the Pittsford Selectboard against the change was that it would prevent people from enjoying the natural area that the road passes through without doing much to deter illegal dumping.

The Brandon contingent suggested that the solution to the

dumping is increased police presence on the road.

"I just can't see closing the road," said one Brandon resident who had been using the road from the age of 15 to his current age of 70. "Are you going to close every road with trash on it?"

"I don't think anyone on this board is interested in closing down the road," said Ms. Malay.

Pittsford board member Tom Hooker said, "Once you close a road, you never get it back."

Pittsford board members also expressed concern that Syndicate Road/Carver Street is sometimes used in emergencies as an alternative to Route 7 and/or West Creek/Florence Road as a means to travel between Brandon and Pittsford.

If Brandon chooses to move forward with the plan, public hearings would need to be held in both Brandon and Pittsford before either town's board could formally vote on the proposal.

Pittsford Selectboard Vice Chair David Mills did not participate in the discussion because he owns land along the roadway in question.

CEDRR

Lyle Jepson of the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region (CEDRR) asked the board to include \$3,000 for CEDRR in Pittsford's Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which will be voted on at Town Meeting in March.

Mr. Jepson explained that CE-

DRR has been working to bring new residents to Rutland County, including through a program that invites people from around the country to spend a weekend discovering the Rutland area.

The discussion drifted from CEDRR's specific programs to a general conversation about what Pittsford needs to do to attract new residents and businesses.

Mr. Atherton stated that Pittsford could use assistance expanding its water and sewer networks in anticipation of new housing construction. He also stated that Pittsford could use more buildings that were suitable for industrial/manufacturing use and that designating certain areas of Pittsford as neighborhood zones could exempt them from some "red tape" that might hinder their development.

Board member Mark Winslow asked Mr. Jepson how CEDRR was addressing what he described as overregulation of childcare facilities and septic systems. Mr. Jepson replied that CEDRR was trying to tackle the issue and that pushback against overregulation was needed.

After Mr. Jepson left the meeting, the Board continued to discuss the possible "ripple effects" of new development in Killington and downtown Rutland, which Board members believed would benefit Pittsford.

Mr. Mills expressed his support for CEDRR, saying that helping economic growth in Rutland County overall will help

Pittsford.

The Board unanimously approved the \$3,000 allocation for CEDRR in the FY26 budget that will go before voters in March.

PERSONAL PROPERTY APPRAISALS

Pittsford's Assessor, Lisa Wright, asked the Board to renew an annual contract with Gail Gantick of G & K Associates to conduct the town's annual appraisal of taxable business equipment. Vermont law allows towns to decide whether to tax

business personal property. Not all have chosen to do so.

Pittsford requires businesses within its jurisdiction to submit inventories of "all furniture and fixtures, apparatus, tools, implements, books, machines, boats, construction devices, and all personal property used or intended to be used for the production, processing, fabrications, assembling, handling, or transport of anything of value..." (as per a letter sent to Pittsford businesses

(See Pittsford SB, Page 18)

REAL ESTATE



In-town & Waterfall Views!

What a spot for your new business - in the center of the thriving village of Brandon and overlooking the waterfall on the Neshobe River! The property has been a family run barbershop since 1931. Being sold "as-is" without the equipment, although the seller would consider selling the equipment to someone seeking to reopen the shop. Upstairs is a permitted apartment for additional rental income or in-town living.

\$125,000



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RoweRealEstate.com

Judy Anderson - Mornings from 6 to 10 am!

101.5 FM

MUD

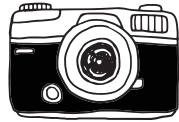
RADIO

The Roots of American Music



Mim's Photos

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



Recognized



Linda Creeley recognized her husband, Dale, in this photo.



E-mail kate@brandonreporter.com
if you can identify someone in
these photos.

Or call us at 247-8080



Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

1. Thou __ do it
6. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
9. Brainstem part
13. Town in New York state
14. Little (Spanish)
15. Continent
16. Retch
17. Short-billed rails
18. Small period of time (abbr.)
19. Confused
21. A team needs one
22. Woman in ancient times
23. Republican Party
24. Spanish be
25. "The Godfather" character Johnny
28. Not around
29. City in Zambia
31. A type of beginning
33. Numb
36. Gurus
38. Small, gray-headed crow
39. Vehicle type
41. Disorders
44. One point east of southeast
45. Indian soldier
46. Tree type
48. Midway between south and southeast
49. It cools your home
51. Corn comes on it
52. Ship's deck
54. A way to bake
56. Improvised
60. Butterfly genus
61. Baseball fields have them
62. Designated space
63. Discharge
64. Two of something
65. Once more
66. Part of your face
67. Tax collector
68. Cassia tree

CLUES DOWN

1. One-time Aaron Rodgers target
2. Wings
3. Overly studious person
4. They protect your valuables
5. The Volunteer State
6. Non-hydraulic cement
7. Horse mackerel
8. Jackson and Diddley are two
9. Splendid displays
10. Mountain in NE Greece
11. A daughter or your brother or sister
12. German surname
14. Having more than one husband at a time
17. Romanian city
20. Energy
21. Makes less hot
23. Gas diffusion electrode
25. Former CIA
26. Set an example for others
27. Support of a particular person
29. One from the Big Apple
30. Mountain range
32. Violate the sanctity of something
34. Supervises flying
35. Talks
37. Persian male given name
40. Born of
42. Forcibly take one's possessions
43. Discounts
47. Knockouts
49. Posh Colorado destination
50. Form of therapy
52. British rock band
53. Type of virus (abbr.)
55. The U. of Miami mascot is one
56. Volcanic crater
57. Middle Eastern nation
58. Sinn __, Irish organization
59. Ethiopian lake
61. Bits per inch (abbr.)
65. Equally

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13						14				15			
16						17				18			
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	41					42			43		44		
			45					46		47		48	
49	50			51				52			53		
54		55				56					57	58	59
60						61					62		
63						64				65			
66						67				68			

Sudoku

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

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

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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

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

Home for the Holidays: Adopt or Foster Today!

As the year comes to a close, our shelter is full of dogs, cats, and kittens dreaming of a warm, loving home. Whether you want to adopt or foster, now is the perfect time to make a difference! Adopt: Bring home a loyal dog, a charming cat, a silly kitten, or a cuddly bunny before the holidays. Begin the new year with a new furry best friend. Foster: Give an animal the gift of a cozy couch to enjoy this season with. You never know, you may fall in love! Help us make sure that no animal spends the holidays alone. Stop by the Adoption Center Tuesday through Saturday, 11 AM to 4 PM, to meet our cats. To learn more about our dogs, call 802.483.6700 x 201 or email adoptions@rchsvt.org. Let's find them all homes before the New Year! View all of our animals at www.rchsvt.org/adopt.

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

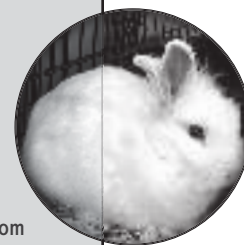


MEET DOBIE- 2-YEAR-OLD. NEUTERED MALE. DOBERMAN PINSCHER. BROWN/TAN

Dobie is a handsome boy with a vibrant personality. While shy at first, he warms up with patience (and maybe a couple of visits). Dobie thrives on physical and mental exercise, loves brain games, and sits politely for treats—though he can't hide his excitement for outdoor adventures! Dobie arrived at RCHS from a busy shelter in the south. He is adjusting well and getting used to the Vermont weather. He needs to be the only dog and has no known history with cats or kids. Ready to meet this silly boy? Give us a call at 802-483-6700 to schedule an appointment. Dobie's waiting to brighten your life!

MEET PIE - 1.5-YEAR-OLD. NEUTERED MALE. LIONHEAD. WHITE.

Pie's name says it all—he's as sweet as can be! This adorable Lionhead bunny loves being around people and enjoys gentle pets. When he's not socializing, you can usually find him in his hutch happily munching on snacks—his absolute favorite thing. Make sure to stock up before you meet him, as treats are the way to his heart. Pie might look familiar; he was adopted from us but sadly returned on 10/9/24 when his previous owners could no longer care for him. He enjoys the company of other rabbits, though we don't have a history of how he does with other animals. If this snack-loving, sweet bunny sounds like your perfect companion, stop by to meet him! The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 AM to 4 PM.



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**OUR ADOPTION CENTER IS OPEN
TUESDAY-SATURDAY FROM
11AM-4PM.**



Ongoing weekly events:

Tuesdays:

Pokemon Club: 3–5 pm
 Magic the Gathering: 5–7 pm
 Pins and Needles: 5:30 – 7 pm - bring a craft, chat with fellow crafters
 Tech Help drop-in: 5–6 pm

Wednesdays:

Homework Help: 3:30–5 pm
 Tech Help: 5–6 pm
 Open Art Night: 5–7 pm - bring your own paints, clay, etc

Thursdays:

Storytime: 10:30 am

Coffee and Cards: 2–4 pm
 ASL Club: 4–5 pm

Fridays:

Friday Flicks: 1–3 pm - Movie of the week and popcorn
 D&D for teens and adults: email eric@brandonpubliclibrary.org for info

Saturdays:

Storytime: 10:30 am

Other events:

Grief Group: 2nd Wednesdays, 5:30–7pm
 Teen Advisory Group: (ages 11–16), first Fridays, 3:30–5 pm
 Game Nights - 3rd Thursdays, 6–8pm

DID YOU KNOW?

We will have some closures over the holidays. We will be closing at 3 pm 12/24, closed 12/25, 12/26, closing at 3 pm 12/31, and closed Jan 1.

D&D for teens: email eric@brandonpubliclibrary.org for details

Book Talk: (starting back up in Jan 2025) - 1st Tuesdays, 6–7pm

Cookbook Club: (starting Jan 2025), 3rd Thursdays- more details to come!

Pittsford SB

(Continued from Page 15)

by Ms. Wright on February 15, 2024). The tax does not apply to a business’s inventory of produced goods.

According to Ms. Wright, the value of such property accounts for over 10% of the town’s Grand List (\$48 million out of \$397 million overall) and brings in almost \$260,000 in tax revenue annually. Ms. Wright also stated that the 2024 tax rate for personal property was 0.6744%, which means that for every 100 dollars of value, the business owner would be taxed 67 cents.

Ms. Wright oversees the appraisals of the town’s real property—houses, buildings, and land—and informed the Board that she did not feel qualified to oversee the appraisal of personal property. Instead, Ms. Gantick of G & K would be preferable, in Ms. Wright’s estimation.

The Board discussed whether the appliances of a short-term rental (e.g., dishwashers, refrigerators, etc.) should be taxed under this program.

Ms. Malay also noted that many business owners find the requirement “invasive.”

Ms. Wright added that Pittsford would likely be facing a town-wide re-assessment of all real property because the value of the town’s Grand List was now significantly less than the fair-market value of the property. The state requires a re-assessment when a town’s Grand List drops below a certain percentage of fair-market value, which is based on actual sales over a 3-year period. The earliest a re-assessment could be carried out would be 2028 or 2029, according to Ms. Wright.

The Board unanimously approved the renewal of the con-

tract at \$12,000.

FIRE TRUCK LEASE PAYMENT

The Board unanimously agreed to spend \$180,000 to pay off the remainder of the town’s obligation on the Pittsford Fire Department’s ladder truck. The \$180K will come from the Vehicle Replacement Fund, which already has \$409K in it. This payment allows the town to save \$22,000 in interest payments annually and, according to Town Manager David Atherton, will keep the FY26 budget only 1.4% higher than the current year’s budget.

WARRANTS AND ORDERS

The Board approved an order in the amount of \$453,088.34 to cover the town’s obligations and expenses. This amount included \$271,134.86 to Pike Industries for paving.

Brandon Police Report

December 2

• Conducted a patrol of Carver Street, Rossiter Street, and Church Street due to recent vehicle break-ins in that area. The Brandon Police Department (BPD) strongly encourages the public to keep all vehicles locked, especially during nighttime hours.

• Conducted a patrol on Park Street.

• Vehicle stop on Grove Street for speeding. Warning issued.

• Conducted speed enforcement on Carver Street due to reports of ongoing speeding complaints by area residents. One speeding violation observed.

• Vehicle stop on Carver Street for speeding. Warning issued.

• Received a walk-in complaint of a late reported hit-and-run vehicle crash that might have occurred in the parking lot of the Post Office on Conant Square. However, the complainant later reported the damage was believed to be caused by the operator hitting his own garage.

• Took fingerprints for nursing licensure.

• Took fingerprints for a volunteer.

• Took fingerprints for school employment.

December 3

• Responded to a report of a suspicious vehicle across from a residence on Town Farm Road. The vehicle was deemed abandoned and was creating a traffic hazard in the roadway. The vehicle was ultimately towed from the area.

• Conducted traffic enforcement near the intersection of Franklin Street and Park Street. One traffic stop was initiated.

• Assisted a motorist at the Hannaford Supermarket regain entry to his truck after he accidentally locked his keys inside.

• Vehicle stop near the intersection of Franklin Street and Park Street for a cell phone violation. Warning issued.

• Received a report from a resident on North Street of an unwanted individual on their property. The subject left prior to the police being contacted. The property owner was advised that the matter was civil in nature (regarding the ownership of an animal), but that she had the option to issue a trespass notice against the indi-

vidual who had come onto her property. A trespass notice was later served on that individual.

• Performed VIN verification on a trailer.

• Assisted the driver of an Amazon delivery truck that got stuck on a class 4 road in the area of Fay Road and Churchill Road. A local tow company helped the driver get his vehicle back on the road.

• Responded to suspicious activity regarding a vehicle parked at a home on Prospect Street. The responding officer determined that the vehicle belonged to a contractor that was at the location pouring concrete.

• Received a complaint of an assault that occurred on North Street. Investigation ongoing with an arrest warrant most likely being sought for the suspect.

December 4

• Conducted speed enforcement on Carver Street. Two operators were stopped for vehicle violations. One ticket issued.

• Vehicle stop on Carver Street for speeding. Warning issued.

• Conducted speed enforcement on Forest Dale Road by the Brandon Senior Center due to ongoing speeding complaints. One operator was stopped and ticketed.

• Vehicle stop on Forest Dale Road for a speed limit violation. Ticket issued.

• Vehicle stop on Carver Street for failure to yield. The operator’s driver’s license was determined to be civilly suspended and a ticket was issued.

• Assisted the Rutland County Sheriff’s Department with a Writ Of Possession service at a residence on Deer Run Road.

• Conducted speed enforcement on Park Street. No violations were observed.

• Received a report of a vehicle versus pedestrian accident on Prospect Street. The incident is under investigation.

• Took fingerprints for employment.

December 5

• Conducted a foot patrol on Birch Hill Road.

• Conducted a foot patrol on Short Swamp Road.

• Conducted a foot patrol on Hollow Road.

• Conducted a foot patrol on (See Police report, Page 19)

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THE BRANDON REPORTER

Police report

(Continued from Page 18)

North Street.

- Conducted a foot patrol on Jones Drive.
- Responded to a rear end collision that occurred on Franklin Street resulting in injuries. One of the drivers was transported to the hospital for treatment. Both vehicles were totaled and towed from the scene.
- Observed suspicious activity involving possible drug sales in the downtown area of Brandon. Activity noted for police intelligence purposes.
- Conducted a patrol on Mulcahy Drive.
- Vehicle stop on Conant Square for driving without headlights. Warning issued.

December 6

- Received a complaint about a vehicle that was parked by the bridge on Center Street that was partially blocking the lane of travel. Prior to police arrival, the vehicle left the area.
- Assisted Brandon Area Rescue with an individual who had fallen on ice.
- Vehicle stop on Conant Square for failure to stop at a stop sign. Warning issued.
- Received a complaint of an illegally parked vehicle blocking the drive-through at Dunkin' on Conant Square.

December 7

- Responded to the area of the Brandon Rescue Building on Franklin Street for a report of a car that had crashed

and was engulfed in fire. The driver/occupants fled the scene prior to the arrival of the officers. One of the officers was injured at the scene when a tire exploded on the vehicle as he was trying to check the car to see if anyone was still inside. Investigation is ongoing.

- Responded to a single-vehicle slide off at the intersection of Town Farm Road and Richmond Road.
- Vehicle stop on Center Street for illegally blocking an intersection. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Union Street near the Union Street Grocery for an illegal turn on a red traffic arrow. Warning issued.
- Vehicle on Route 7 for traveling too fast for road conditions. Warning issued.

December 8

- Attempted to stop a gray/silver Toyota Tacoma pick-up truck that was driving recklessly in the parking lot of the OVUHS. The vehicle fled at high speed and ran a stop sign attempting to elude the officer. Due to the poor and snowy road conditions at the time, the officer discontinued the pursuit for safety reasons.
- Received a report of suspicious activity in the Downtown area. Footprints were observed on multiple streets in this area where an individual is believed to be checking for unlocked vehicles. The public is once again reminded to keep their vehicles locked and to report any suspicious activity to the BPD.

• Responded to a report of a chemical spill on Center Street. The fire department was notified, and it was discovered to be hydraulic fluid, likely from a snowplow.

- Vehicle stop for speeding on Conant Square. Ticket issued.
- Vehicle stop on Conant Square for speeding. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Pearl Street for speeding. Warning issued.
- Vehicle stop on Forest Dale Road for driving too fast for road conditions. Warning issued.
- Received a report of larceny from a vehicle on Union Street in which money and a firearm were stolen from a parked vehicle. Investigation ongoing.

Brandon SB

(Continued from Page 1)

on contributions. Mr. Hopkins did not have an explanation for the decision, stating that the coverage offered by both plans was comparable.

At 11/24ths through the fiscal year, the town is 49% through its FY25 budget, which is just slightly above the 46% that 11/24ths represents.

The Selectboard will NOT meet on Monday, December 23, which would be its normal meeting date. Instead, it will hold a special meeting on Monday, December 30 at 6:30 to conduct essential business, such as paying the town's bills.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Economic Development Officer and Rec Director Bill Moore presented his report to the Board. Highlights included:

Registration for Brandon Idol is now open. The first try-out concert will take place on January 10. Subsequent, themed performances will be held on Feb. 14, March 14, April 11, and May 16. Registration is limited, so anyone interested should act quickly.

Brandon Rec and the Brandon Free Public Library will be hosting Sunday quiz nights at the Brandon Inn beginning in January. The game begins at 6:30 and is free of charge.

Adult Cornhole will be held on Tuesday evenings in the Town Hall starting on January 14th.

BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Moore explained to the Board that a .44-acre parcel of land on the old Training School

campus that belonged to the town had been thought for 31 years to belong to an adjacent landowner, Ultravation. The landowner was now asking that the land be attached to their parcel, since they had used and maintained it for the last 31 years.

Mr. Moore stated that the parcel was of little or no use to the town and that Ultravation had been using it to store vehicles. He recommended that the town release the parcel to Ultravation.

Cecil Reniche-Smith, who was once on the Selectboard and was in attendance, asked whether Ultravation had a claim for adverse possession, which is triggered when someone openly uses land that doesn't legally belong to them for a long enough period of time that the law recognizes a legal claim to it.

The Board considered whether it made more sense to ask for money in exchange for the parcel or to quitclaim it to Ultravation and avoid the legal fees of a land sale.

Mr. Moore made clear that the Board did not need to take action at the meeting and urged Board members to visit the site so that action could be taken in January.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE GRAND LIST

The Board approved a set of adjustments to the town's Grand List that decreased the List's total value by \$3,580. This adjustment is a yearly process by which the town notes commencements or expirations of tax exemptions and stabilizations, as well as the addition or loss of taxable property through construction or destruc-

tion, such as a house fire.

TRANSFER OF 1% FUNDS

The Board approved two transfers of funds from the 1% local option tax fund. The first transfer was in the amount of \$73,294 and was applied toward the purchase of a replacement highway truck. The second transfer was in the amount of \$39,521.34 and was applied toward FY25 paving projects. Both of these expendi-

tures had been approved by the Board at previous meetings.

The town is in possession of the new truck, and it has already been put to use.


PRESENTATION BY AMERICANS FOR A CLEAN ATMOSPHERE

Lauren Tessaro of Leicester made a presentation to the Board on behalf of Americans for a Clean Atmosphere. Ms. Tessaro

is seeking signatures on a petition to get an article on the ballot on Town Meeting. The article asks whether the people of Brandon would like the Brandon Selectboard to send a letter to the Governor and Legislator demanding a prohibition of climate-related geoeengineering in Vermont.

Ms. Tessaro displayed photographs of the skies above this
(See Brandon SB, Page 20)

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE




ARIES March 21-April 20
Aries, a special person in your life deserves all of your attention. Romance might be on your mind, and you'll look forward to all of the time you can spend together.

TAURUS April 21-May 21
You may feel artistically inspired this week, Taurus. Explore projects like home improvements or crafting. There are many things to try.

GEMINI May 22-June 21
Your attendance at a wedding or another special event could have your thoughts moving in a romantic direction, Gemini. Maybe you're thinking of taking your relationship to another level?

CANCER June 22-July 22
Cancer, forge ahead in your efforts if you aspire to learn a new skill or take on a different project. This might involve meeting



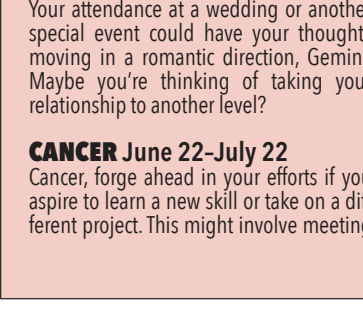
LEO July 23-Aug. 23
Leo, it is important to put others first this week, particularly your spouse or romantic partner. You don't want any hurt feelings circulating right now.

VIRGO Aug. 24-Sept. 22
An unexpected visitor might come your way in the next few days, Virgo. This could require overhauling your schedule and even space in your home to make room.

LIBRA Sept. 23-Oct. 23
Family and friends will have a difficult time changing your mind once you have taken a stance, Libra. You have dug in your heels on this topic.

SCORPIO Oct. 24-Nov. 22
Scorpio, new work assignments or additional business may complicate matters in the days ahead. That can be great during times of year when spending can get out of control.

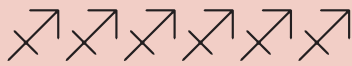
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21
As you prepare for the colder temperatures, holistic arts, acupuncture, herbs, and therapies might be on your mind, Sagittarius. You don't want to be sick this go-around.



CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 20
Capricorn, you will try to meet the demands of your need for information this week. Chances are you'll be reading the newspaper and news outlets as much as you can.

AQUARIUS Jan. 21-Feb. 18
You cannot gain traction right now, Aquarius. Perhaps you haven't met the right people yet? Keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities.

PISCES Feb. 19-March 20
Pisces, if a career change has been on your mind, the new year might be a chance to get those gears moving in the right direction.



FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

Dec. 13 Diego Rivera, artist (d)
Dec. 14 Tycho Brahe, astronomer (d)
Dec. 15 Nero, Roman emperor (d)
Dec. 16 Catherine of Aragon, Queen Consort of England (d)
Dec. 17 Ludwig Von Beethoven, composer (d)
Dec. 18 Steve Biko, Anti-apartheid activist, (d)
Dec. 19 Edit Piaf, singer (d)

Brandon SB

(Continued from Page 19)
 as chemtrails created as part of a Congressionally mandated program designed to introduce various compounds into the atmosphere to counteract the effects of climate change. Ms. Tessaro asserted that these compounds could degrade our soils and prevent sunlight from reaching agricultural crops in our area.
 Ms. Tessaro provided the Board with materials that she said substantiated her allegations. These materials can now be found on the town website along with the Selectboard packed for 12/09/24. The materials include the proposed article for the March ballot, a report from the World Meteorological Organization, and a report

from the White House on Congressionally mandated research on solar radiation modification.

Board Chair Doug Bailey responded that the Board would not be able to send the letter without the approval of Brandon voters. Ms. Tessaro's petition would need at least 165 signatures of registered Brandon voters in order to make it onto the March 2025 ballot. Mr. Bailey also said that Ms. Tessaro could hold a public meeting to garner support for her petition if she chose.

WARRANT

The Board unanimously approved a warrant in the amount of \$464,875.02 to cover the town's obligations and expenses.

Facing double-digit budget hikes, local leaders weigh tough choices

BY KEVIN O'CONNOR/
 VTDIGGER

Richmond Town Manager Josh Arneson, like other municipal leaders in Vermont's 247 cities and towns, annually celebrates the holidays not by writing cards, but instead by drafting a local government budget for the coming fiscal year.

"We always start out with a wish list," Arneson said in his community of 4,167 people.

This season, however, leaders are dreaming less and dreading more.

Public complaints about rising property tax bills that fund municipal services and schools recently have centered on education spending. But Richmond is one of many communities facing costlier town employee

health insurance (10% more in its case, a bargain compared to other places) and continuing flood cleanup (it finally received federal aid for almost \$1 million in damage for 2023, yet still faces a nearly \$2 million bill for 2024).

Add other increases and Richmond has calculated a municipal budget hike as high as 21% to fund town services at current levels starting July 1, 2025.

"We can't do that," Arneson said as he and the local selectboard look for cuts before placing a coming budget proposal on the March Town Meeting ballot. "This year, everything seems to be exacerbated."

Richmond isn't alone. Brattleboro is seeking to lower a 2025-26 municipal base budget that, without reductions, would spark a 22% tax increase, according to estimates. Montpelier is surveying residents about budget priorities after determining that retaining all current local government services would require a 24% hike.

"That is clearly not acceptable," Montpelier City Manager William Fraser wrote in the survey, "and hard decisions will need to be made to bring that number down."

Vermont communities seeking to vote on budgets in March must set and publicize the bal-

lot by Feb. 2, according to the state. That gives local officials less than two months to decide what to continue and what to cut.

For most, maintaining the status quo isn't an option.

"I have had many conversations with taxpayers who feel they can just no longer afford to live in Vermont," said Ellen Majonen, interim town clerk, treasurer and delinquent tax collector in Guilford. "The cost

Flooding in 2023 and 2024 has left dozens of communities swimming in red ink. Many have tapped budget reserves or taken out loans to stay solvent as they wait for cleanup money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

of living here coupled with taxes is just too much to handle."

A VTDigger poll of municipal officials shows that employee health insurance is the most shared driver of rising costs, with few choices other than the state's two largest providers, Blue Cross

Blue Shield and MVP Health Care.

Bennington, for example, is working to limit a proposed local budget increase to 5%, even though it's facing up to a 26% increase in health insurance premiums on Jan. 1.

"That will impact the current budget as well as the one for the coming year," Bennington Town Manager Stuart Hurd said.

Flooding in 2023 and 2024 has left dozens of communities swimming in red ink. Many have tapped budget reserves or taken out loans to stay solvent as they wait for cleanup money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

FEMA recently announced it would increase its reimbursement rate for July 2023 flooding from 75 to 90%. But that still leaves state and local governments to pick up the remaining 10%.

That's a challenge in places like Marshfield, population 1,583. In March 2023, residents there approved a \$1.39 million local budget. Then that July, they sustained \$1.6 million in flood damage.

"Even with the additional FEMA reimbursements, the town's share is going to be about \$300,000 for the 2023 flood, and we have more damage from the 2024 flood to con-

tend with," Marshfield Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe said this month.

Many of the same communities have also lost a sizable percentage of their tax bases after stormwater damaged or destroyed homes and businesses.

"The flooding caused a significant hit to our grand list," Plainfield Town Clerk Bram Towbin said of an estimated \$1 million decrease — or about 10% of total assessed property value. "Given the circumstances, we are approaching budgeting by balancing the harsh reality of lower tax revenues and higher costs."

Vermont cities and towns are drafting local government budgets at the same time the state is projecting education property tax bills will rise in the coming fiscal year by an average of 5.9%.

"With this," Gov. Phil Scott said in a statement, "Vermonters will have seen a 33% increase in education property taxes in the last three years."

Many municipalities know only too well.

"The large jump last year was the school budget," said Maureen Harvey, town clerk and treasurer in Duxbury. "We are mindful not to have a local increase to make the tax bill more painful."

Local leaders are drafting their budgets at public meetings set to continue next month. In Brattleboro and Montpelier, residents are questioning why their communities have added supplementary positions over the years such as full-time coordinators for communications and sustainability.

"I'm not advocating for staff cuts," Brattleboro resident Dick DeGray recently told the town selectboard, "but the reality is they have to be on the table."

Montpelier City Council member Tim Heney was the sole "no" vote when officials proposed last year's budget, meeting minutes show. This season, he's far from alone in his concerns.

"There's definitely a lot of discussion around the community about how are we going to get out of this?" Heney said. "The primary roles of city government are police, fire and public works. There's a bunch of extracurricular things that we do, but they can't bump our emergency responses. We're trying to set some priorities."

(See *Tough choices*, Page 23)

Restaurant guide



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De la Provence à Vous

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Sports



PICTURED WITH THEIR jerseys (l to r): Kyle Pockett, Isaac Whitney, Noel Pearsons, and Addison Boynton. Photos by Kate McKay



Otter Valley Football Club celebrates an amazing season

The OV Football Club held its annual end-of-season dinner to celebrate the players, coaches, and families that helped make 2024 such a success for the team. OV Football made it all the way to the Division Cham-

pionship!

At the dinner, team members in their senior year were given their jerseys and attendees viewed a slide show of the season's best memories.

Thanks for making us all proud, OV Football! Onward and upward!

UVM men's soccer advances to NCAA tournament semifinals for the first time in Catamount history

BY OLIVIA HAGIOS/
VTDIGGER

The University of Vermont men's soccer team celebrates a victory over the University of Pittsburgh on Saturday, Dec. 7. The victory secured the team's first appearance in the men's Division 1 NCAA College Cup. Photo courtesy of the University of Vermont.

ing Catamount history this season, advancing to the semi-final round of the NCAA's Division 1

tournament for the first time in history as the team chases a national championship.



THE UNIVERSITY OF Vermont men's soccer team celebrates a victory over the University of Pittsburgh on Saturday, Dec. 7. The victory secured the team's first appearance in the men's Division 1 NCAA College Cup. Photo courtesy of UVM

The University of Vermont men's soccer team is mak-

The Catamounts have won four-straight NCAA tournament games, including their latest victory over No. 2 Pittsburgh on Saturday. The 2-0 quarterfinal win saw second half goals from junior forward Maximilian Kissel and senior Yaniv Bazini.

(See UVM Soccer, Page 23)

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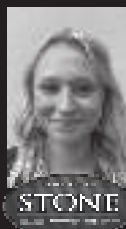
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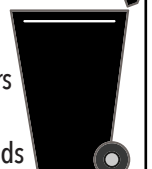
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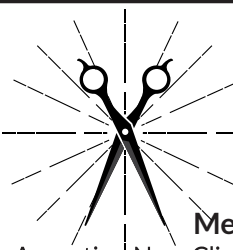
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In eagerly anticipated 'Dec. 1 letter,' Vermont's tax department projects 5.9% property tax increase next year

BY ETHAN WEINSTEIN

Vermonters can expect a 5.9% average increase in education property taxes next year absent major changes, according to a forecast from the Vermont Department of Taxes.

The news arrived Monday in the form of the "Dec. 1 letter," an annual projection required by law that represents the first public-facing estimate of expected education property taxes for the fiscal year starting July 2025. It relies on data from the state Agency of Education and local school districts, which are already engaged in their budget-making processes, and is produced in collaboration with the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office.

In a written statement, Gov. Phil Scott said that "with this projected increase, Vermonters will have seen a 33% increase in education property taxes in the last three years. This is the result of unsustainable costs, an aging demographic, and smaller workforce."

Vermonters "simply cannot afford more," Scott said, call-

ing on lawmakers to work with his administration to reduce the tax burden. He also thanked school administrators and school board members, who he said "have made difficult decisions" to prevent more substantial projected tax increases.

Last year's Dec. 1 letter forecast an 18.5% education property tax increase. Ultimately, after local school budget revisions, new taxes and injections of one-time funds to buy down the surge, the average increase wound up at 13.8%. Health care costs, student mental health

needs, ailing infrastructure and inflation all contributed to last year's increase.

For the next fiscal year, officials projected education spending would rise by about \$115 million, or 6.1%. The use of roughly \$69 million in one-time funds last year also added cost pressure,

Craig Bolio, Vermont's tax commissioner, wrote in the letter, a figure slightly offset by about \$33 million of unused money from the current fiscal year.

Because lawmakers made

few changes to Vermont's education finance system last legislative session, and as cost pressures on schools have continued, stakeholders worried about a similar double digit spike this year. The worst fears appeared to be avoided, but officials cautioned the nearly 6% increase is still substantial, especially on top of multiple years of escalation.

"We know Vermonters are already struggling to pay for this year's unprecedented increase in property taxes, I expect another projected increase will be difficult to hear," Bolio said in a statement alongside his department's letter. "It's important that we continue to work together to find solutions to make our education funding system sustainable."

He also said the Scott administration "will propose a framework for discussion during the legislative session that builds upon prior proposals and recent statewide discussions." Scott's team and Democratic lawmakers have sparred in recent years over whether the administration should develop new policy proposals or whether prior ideas remain as relevant as ever.

Rep. Emilie Kornheiser, D-Brattleboro, who chairs the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, said on Monday that the letter's forecast would not change the work ahead for lawmakers.

"We're going to need to look at new ways of doing things," she said. "Certainly the number was not as high as some people's worst fears, but that doesn't mean that Vermonters can sustain continued increases."

Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Baruth, D/P-Chittenden Central, said in a statement that the projected increase, though not the worst case scenario, is "not just unacceptable — it continues to constitute an evolving emergency that the Legislature must make its first priority come January."

Republican leaders in the Legislature, meanwhile, signaled they would pursue "tax relief" this session, calling on

their colleagues to implement "fundamental systemic reform" to Vermont's education finance system.

"Some have proposed that education tax increases can be averted by simply dedicating additional revenue to the Education Fund or cost-shifting," said Rep. Scott Beck, R-St. Johnsbury, who was recently tapped to lead Senate Republicans when he joins that body in January, and House Minority Leader Pattie McCoy, R-Poultney, in a written statement. "Others believe if we craft a correct system of penalties and thresholds, the problem can be solved. We strongly disagree."

"With this projected increase, Vermonters will have seen a 33% increase in education property taxes in the last three years. This is the result of unsustainable costs, an aging demographic, and smaller workforce."

—Gov. Phil Scott

Tough choices

(Continued from Page 20)

Local leaders in Brandon, having trimmed public works and highway jobs in previous years, now are weighing police

staffing levels. But Town Manager Seth Hopkins, echoing the sentiments of many peers statewide, noted the difficulty "to economize and still try to

provide the services the community requires and expects."

Concluded Arneson in Richmond: "We'll keep working on it.

UVM soccer

(Continued from Page 21)

"One of our players made a replica of this National Championship trophy and brings it with us on the road, and that's what our eyes are set on," head coach Rob Dow said at a post-game press conference on Saturday. "It's been a vision of ours and we talked about it starting in January."

The Catamounts next play the No. 3 seed University of Denver Pioneers in a semifinal game this Friday at 5 p.m. in Cary, North Carolina. The game will be broadcast live on ESPN and ESPNU.

UVM's postseason march began last month when the team won the America East Conference title game over Bryant University, securing a spot in the national tournament. They've since gone on to beat Iona University, Hofstra University, the University of San Diego and the University of Pittsburgh in the

NCAA tournament.

The Catamounts had advanced to the quarterfinals in two of the past three years — but had never made it to the Final Four, known as the College Cup, until now.

Dow has now coached his team to the most NCAA tournament wins of any D1 men's soccer program in the country, with nine wins since 2022, according to the UVM athletic department.

Graduate student and defensive player Zach Barrett said the team is confident it can keep winning.

"It doesn't really matter who we're playing, it's more about what we do," he said at the Saturday press conference.

A win Friday against Denver would place UVM in the College Cup National Championship game on Dec. 16 to play for the 2024 NCAA title.

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Anyone who would like their record should call Kayla Emerson at the RNESU Office at (802)247-5757 prior to December 31, 2024 to make arrangements to pick it up.

Brooke Dahlin
Human Resources Coordinator

Moonlight Madness at Brandon Town Hall was a joyful night



FOLKS CAME FROM far and wide to check off their holiday gift list at Moonlight Madness in Brandon on Friday. Here, a dozen or so vendors sold gifts in Brandon Town Hall. Wreaths, honey, knitted goods...all made locally!

Photo by Steven Jupiter



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