

The Record



THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021

LOCAL NEWS
**Local Woman
Beekeeper Of The Year**

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Face Cover Continues. Towns, Schools, Businesses
Maintain Mask Requirements. **Page 2**



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Clare Brooks, owner of Little Village Toy & Book Shop in Littleton, and other downtown retailers are preparing for an uncertain Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving that traditionally kicks off the holiday shopping season. (File Photo/Paul Hayes)



Littleton To Require Masks In Municipal Buildings, Properties

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Although the governor allowed the mask mandate that had been in place since Nov. 20 to expire on Friday, one town is continuing it for its municipal buildings and properties.

On Friday afternoon, Littleton Fire Rescue Chief and emergency management director Michael McQuillen announced the town of Littleton's administrative directive, citing a steep rise of new cases statewide and locally.

That afternoon, the town of Littleton had 51 active COVID-19 cases, the highest by far of any North Country community and the highest in Littleton at any one time during the pandemic.

The governor's order allows municipalities and private businesses to make their own decisions on mask use, and some have chosen to keep mask requirements.

"We are just following what has been in place for masks," said Littleton Town Manager James Gleason. "We are not mandating anything new or different ... It doesn't dictate mask use to businesses. We are just saying that in town buildings, because of the spike in cases locally, that we continue to have mask use ... It was something that was already in place and we thought it was easy to continue. We

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Some Towns, Businesses To Continue To Require Masks

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

Don't toss your masks just yet.

While it's true that Gov. Chris Sununu allowed New Hampshire's mask mandate to expire on April 16, municipalities and private businesses can still demand face coverings.

Some plan to do just that.

Gretchen Harvey, owner of Aylakai & The Broom Closet in Littleton, will continue to require customers to wear masks — regardless of a state mandate.

She said masks remain necessary as COVID-19 case numbers surge in New Hampshire, particularly in Littleton, which reported a record 51 cases on April 15.

Last Friday, the town's 7-day positive test rate was the fifth highest in the state at 17.3%. Neighboring Bethlehem was the fourth highest (17.4%).

"With cases on the rise, I can't even imagine why the mask mandate is being lifted, to be quite honest," she said. "Masks have helped protect my staff and me all of last summer and through the holidays. We have a very small space, with a lot of people coming from all over the place, and none of my employees have gotten ill because we are following the proper protocols."

Similarly, Clare Brooks, owner of Little Village Toy and Book Shop in Littleton, will maintain a mask requirement for customers in compliance with federal Centers for Disease Control guidelines.

Meanwhile, she noted, employee mask requirements are a separate issue. They are covered under New Hampshire's retail and restaurant guidelines, which expire May 7.

Brooks disagreed with Sununu's decision to lift the mask mandate now, noting that the majority of New Hampshire residents won't be fully immunized until at least mid-May.

"My customers want masks," she said. "Ninety-nine percent of my customers are coming here because of that. I'd rather lose a couple of customers for their unwillingness to wear masks than lose a couple of customers to COVID."

Harvey and Brooks both faced pushback from anti-mask customers prior to the governor's mask mandate in November. They expect those outbursts could occur again once it expires.

"We've just got to keep doing what we're doing a little while longer to get over the hump," Harvey said. "Sure it's a pain in the ass. Nobody wants to wear these stupid masks every day. But we're doing it because it's the right thing to do, and it's been working."

Elsewhere, Franconia's municipal face-covering ordinance enacted on Nov. 23 — a week after the governor's mask mandate began — will continue.

The regulation remains in effect for 30 days after the lifting of the COVID-19 State of Emergency by the governor, unless it is renewed by the Select Board.

It has an enforcement piece — with a written warning for the first offense and fines of \$100 for the second offense and

\$2000 for the third and subsequent violations — and includes the following provisions:

— Employees of all businesses would need to wear a face-covering over their mouth and nose when interacting with the public, and whenever they are within six feet of a co-worker or customer.

— Members of the public would have to wear masks when entering any business or government building, or common area in a residential/commercial building complex of greater than two units.

— Face coverings are not required in outdoor public spaces or worksites where people can maintain six feet of public distance. They are also not required for restaurant patrons while seated at tables.

Franconia also has a separate policy that requires masks for employees and visitors in town buildings.

Jill Brewer, chair of the Franconia Select Board, criticized the governor's decision to let the state mask mandate expire as "premature" but noted that Franconia has reported no problems with mask-wearing.

"I've been really impressed with how Franconia has been complying. Whenever I go in a business people are masked and the stores have done a good job of putting signage up," she said, adding that Franconia Police have not been called on to enforce the town's mask ordinance. "So my perception is that it's been working really well, and hopefully it will continue to work and people won't get complacent, because obviously, the masks are working."

Littleton Schools Also Mandate Face Coverings

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

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News Briefs

LHS Vice-Principal Voices Concerns About Board Transparency, Ethics

LITTLETON — The outgoing vice-principal of Daisy Bronson Middle School/Littleton High School blasted some school board members for what he said has been a lack of transparency, including about a recent investigation, questionable ethics, and a minority of members driving board decisions.

During the Littleton School Board meeting on April 19, DBMS/LHS Vice-Principal Greg Fillion, who tendered his resignation in November 2019 and departs the Littleton School District SAU 84 on June 30, said he has tried to meet with the board about his concerns, but was unable to.

"I want people to understand that I'm doing this as respectfully as I can," he said at the beginning of a 17-minute exchange that at times grew tense. "I've asked three times to meet with the school board in non-public session and all three times I've been turned down. I don't feel like I have much of a choice but to make sure I'm heard. I'm concerned about board ethics, board behavior, with some of our board members and previous board members, and what ... it's done to our district. In December, I filed a complaint that led to an investigation."

Because some information is non-public under the state's right-to-know law, Fillion said he will remain professional and not use names.

"Is there anything in the board minutes that explains that the board had an investigation?" he asked. "Is the public aware that an investigation was done?"

The minutes from the last executive board work session note sealed minutes from a non-public discussion, but those non-public minutes were sealed in public session and don't indicate what was being sealed, said Fillion.

"Greg, I'm going to ask you to refrain from talking any more about any investigation," said Ann Wiggett, vice-chair of the school board who previously served as board chair.

"Wait a minute here, Ann," said Fillion. "I asked to speak with you three times."

She asked if he understood what was then said by Mike Elwell, school board legal counsel who was at Monday's meeting and who spoke briefly with school board chairman Greg Cook and Wiggett after Fillion began speaking. (Elwell's comments are inaudible on the meeting video recording).

"I heard what he said," said Fillion. "Is this a board decision?"

"Cease and desist," said Wiggett.

"Is this a board decision or your decision?" he asked.

"It's not my decision," said Wiggett. "Cease and desist. We'll talk about it in non-public."

"Let me move on to one other thing then," said Fillion.

"I think that's enough," said Wiggett.

"I don't understand," said Fillion. "I haven't violated anybody's rights."

"Okay, what do you want to talk about?" asked Wiggett.

Under the right-to-know law, there are three exemptions that allow meeting minutes to be sealed, including a discussion that could hurt the reputation of someone other than a board member, said Fillion.

If the non-public discussion is exempt from disclosure, the meeting minutes could still reflect the general nature of that discussion and why it's non-public without violating anyone's confidentiality or reputation, as other school districts and towns do in their meeting minutes, he said.

"I think we can do a better job about being transparent with the public," said Fillion.

On the third time, he tried to meet with the board in a non-public session, Fillion said he received three positive responses from board members, but still was not provided an opportunity to meet.

"Now, I'm concerned about an investigation that involves a board member," he said.

"No, Greg," said Wiggett.

Fillion said he'll then move on to another topic - a recent board meeting when school board member Erica Antonucci asked a question about SAU 84 Superintendent William Hart and Cook possibly violating board policy regarding meetings they have together on the Wednesday before Monday's regularly scheduled meetings with the full board.

"Dr. Hart explains that he's been working with the chair and the vice-chair as his first line and this is how he conducted business as previous superintendent, which is fine," said Fillion. "However, board policy doesn't state that's the way we conduct business. As I understand it, the superintendent meets with the board chair when there's an emergency situation ... and to set the agenda."

But Cook indicated the Wednesday meetings go beyond that, said Fillion.

"Just to clarify, we had a very robust discussion about that particular issue," said school board member Matt St. John. "We have a board meeting coming up on Thursday, in part to discuss how the board should operate in meetings and if a change in the policy should be considered, I think as a direct consequence of that incident ..."

"Here's the concern," said Fillion. "There's a lot of communication between the superintendent, the chair, and the assistant chair, to include a Zoom meeting that there's no notes and minutes of. And then a decision changes. That's a different picture than what was presented ... I'm concerned that we're making decisions as a board when the board isn't making decisions all the time. There's five board members. Five board members should have a say in what's going on. We hire a superintendent to run a district. The superintendent should be able to run a district without passing everything along to a school board."

Fillion said the school district is about to lose what in his opinion is the second most dedicated employee it has ever had.

"In my opinion, a lot of it has to do with board micromanagement and conflicts of interest," he said. "There have been 21 superintendents, principals, and assistant principals in my 21 years in Littleton. I don't think the buildings are the entire problem."

Transparency and accountability are among the district's stated core values, said Fillion.

He said the first time he asked to meet with the board in non-public he was told it would violate the law.

"That came from Mr. Cook," he said. "It's hard to imagine the SAU 84 school board is only hearing appropriate activity in non-public session all the time. And again, this is what I asked for three times to prevent this from being public."

Fillion said the third time he asked the board for a non-public meeting he offered to include his exit interview in the meeting.

"Your request was to talk about an investigation, which was closed and done and over with," said Wiggett. "We said if you wanted an exit interview, you could have one, but that was not going to be discussed."

St. John said the issue of transparency stemming from Antonucci's question at the earlier meeting was discussed by the board at length.

"I think the three of us [St. John, Antonucci, and Larry Blaisdell] left that discussion feeling that we were heard and that we have a clear path forward to making sure we can avoid those perceived issues that lack transparency or lack due process," said St. John. "I do think the entire board, all five of us, recognizes that it's important that we be more transparent."

On Tuesday afternoon, The Caledonian-Record reached out to the New Hampshire Department of Education regarding the nature of the investigation, when it concluded, and what the findings were.

That information was not available by press time.

Cook on Tuesday said he can't talk about the investigation and referred all questions to Wiggett.

"I can't discuss the general findings, but it's concluded and the situation has been handled," said Wiggett.

Fillion, a 1991 LHS graduate, and DBMS/LHS Principal Jennifer Carbonneau, a 1990 LHS graduate, were hired for their respective administrative positions in the spring of 2017.

In November 2019, both tendered their resignations, a few months after former Littleton School District SAU 84 Superintendent Steven Nilhas, who is now director of curriculum and instruction at White Mountains Regional School District SAU 36, announced that he will be resigning from SAU 84.

Carbonneau will be the next principal of Haverhill Cooperative Middle School beginning on July 1.

Tenant Caught Between Property Owner, Town

WHITEFIELD — Brian Gosselin is stuck between a rock and a hard place.

His business, Brian's Auto Body, is housed in the former Brown Street Furniture building which has fallen into disrepair.

The owner, Reg Abbott, reportedly hasn't paid over \$200,000 in town and federal liens on the 12-acre property.

As a result, the town won't connect the building to water and sewer.

Frustrated, Gosselin stopped paying rent nearly a year ago. He said he won't pay another cent if Abbott simply pockets the money. He worries that the \$65,000 he invested in his business could be lost if either the Abbott or the town padlock his doors.

"I'm kind of floating out there in limbo," Gosselin said.

On Monday, April 19, an exasperated Gosselin brought his concerns to the Board of Selectmen.

They offered sympathy. Select Board chair Peter Corey said the property owner has made no effort to settle his tax liens, which total around \$236,000.

That includes \$106,305.12 owed to the town for unpaid property, water and sewer taxes, and approximately \$130,000 to the Environmental Protection Agency for hazardous material disposal.

"[Abbott] has never come to the town in my five years as a Selectman to try and negotiate anything, or make good on any of his back taxes," Corey said, noting that Abbott continues to collect payment from construction crews, who use the property as a staging area for a water project. "It's extremely frustrating knowing that he's getting some income from the property and that it's not in turn coming to the town."

Reached on Tuesday, Abbott expressed dismay with the property.

He purchased it at auction in 2013 for \$122,500, well below its then assessed value of \$1.1 million.

For a time, it served as a warehouse for his business, Family Furniture, which has locations in Littleton and Derby, Vt.

However much of the former Brown Street Furniture building is currently vacant and in ruins.

"I just want someone to pay the back taxes and take the building over," said Abbott, who described the property as an albatross. He added that Whitefield officials have offered him little assistance on the matter. "The town has never done anything to help me."

Brown Street Furniture was a 45-year-old furniture-making business that produced custom-made, high-end furniture products that were sold across the United States and Canada. It was once Whitefield's largest employer.

It was sold to Massachusetts investors in 2008, experienced brief growth, then ran into cash flow problems during the great

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ON THE COVER: A recliner sits on the side of the road off Route 302.

COVID Worsens Youth Mental Health Struggle Across The State

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

New Hampshire has seen increased demand for childhood mental health services during the pandemic.

Ken Norton, executive director of the state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said each day an average of 16 school-age children wait in New Hampshire emergency rooms seeking hospitalization for mental health crises.

It reflects a steady increase from 7-per-day when COVID-19 began and 10-per-day in September.

“We are seeing adolescents who are suffering from a variety of COVID mental health problems. We are seeing increased depression, anxiety, self-injurious behaviors and suicidal ideation.”

— Dr. John Hinck

On Valentine’s Day, a record 51 children, ages 18-and-under, sought hospital treatment for serious depression, self-harm, or suicide risk.

“National data has shown that while we’re seeing increased stress, anxiety and depression across all ages, it’s impacting youth and young adults most,” said Norton during a roundtable hosted by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen on Friday. “For kids who may have missed significant academic achievements or milestones during the past year — social and developmental — this could have long-term and far-reaching impacts on their mental health.”

More than a dozen mental health professionals took part in the roundtable talk.

They described a New Hampshire mental health system that was understaffed, underfunded, and falling short of meeting the needs of at-risk residents, including children whose lives have been disrupted by COVID.

“Even before the pandemic, New Hampshire’s statistics around mental health, and particularly adolescent mental health,

have been worse than the national average,” Shaheen said. “And the pandemic, we don’t have the specific data to confirm this, but based on everything that I’m hearing from people the pandemic has made things worse.”

INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Dr. John Hinck, president-elect of the New Hampshire Psychiatric Society and a psychiatrist at New Hampshire Hospital, outlined the many ways that Granite State youth were impacted by the coronavirus.

“We are seeing adolescents who are suffering from a variety of COVID mental health problems. We are seeing increased depression, anxiety, self-injurious behaviors and suicidal ideation,” he said, adding that those problems have occurred “in the context of COVID-related stress, isolation from friends, disruption to families, and disruption to education. The adolescents seem alienated from their friends and society.”

He pointed to insufficient resources to meet the surge in demand.

New Hampshire lacks enough bed space for youth psychiatric patients. The average wait time for a hospital bed is five days, despite New Hampshire Hospital adding 10 beds in response to COVID demand.

At the same time, the state faces a shortage of nurses and mental health professionals. New Hampshire’s community mental health centers have more than 200 vacancies. Insufficient workforce not only limits access to services, but slows the implementation of the state’s 10-year Mental Health Plan.

Hinck called on the federal government to provide additional funding to improve and expand New Hampshire’s mental health system.

“Clearly we need better access to mental health services, in both in-patient and out-patient settings,” he said. “Regarding

See **Mental Health** Page 8

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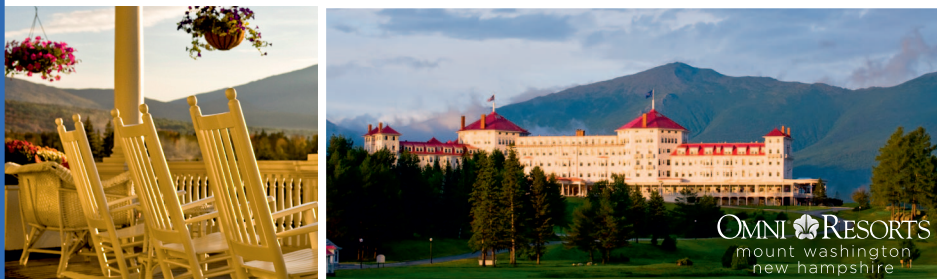


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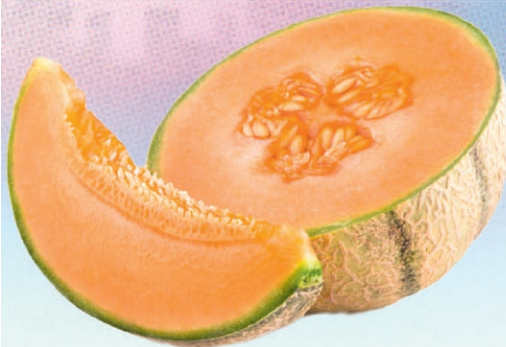
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News Briefs

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recession. By 2012 it had closed.

In the eight years since it was sold at auction, much of the 48,000-square-foot factory space, 17,000-square-foot warehouse and 12 acres of land have fallen into disrepair.

“We frequently get a lot of residents who want us to do something about it,” Corey said. “But at this point, there’s really not anything we can do.”

The town is unwilling to take possession of the property, Corey said, because of pending environmental issues.

The state Department of Environmental Resources has conducted a Level 1 environmental assessment of the land last year, and recommended a Level 2 assessment to determine if potentially costly clean-up is needed.

“We have not taken the property for back taxes, even though it’s over \$100,000, because of the potential environmental liability issues, and the liability of taking on a building that is in a significantly dilapidated state that has to be secured or demolished,” Corey said.

Meanwhile, Gosselin finds himself in a precarious position.

He moved into the former Brown Street Furniture building a year ago and invested \$65,000 in his shop under a false promise from Abbott, he said.

“[Abbott] told me he owed \$49,000 to the EPA, and if I took care of that bill I was scott free. Well, boy, that was a load of you-know-what,” Gosselin said.

He discovered that the liens on the property exceeded its current assessed value. What’s more, approximately 75% of the building — the area he does not occupy — was “an eyesore” and needed to be demolished.

Even so, Gosselin went to the Select Board on Monday and offered to pay the back taxes, in order to protect his interests and potentially take ownership of the building.

However the Select Board cautioned him against that, at least until the environmental assessment was completed and potential clean-up costs were determined.

At the suggestion of the Select Board, Gosselin is expected to consult with an attorney, to determine his next course of action.

“Because I have so much invested, to just walk away at this point in time with no return doesn’t make any sense to me. Not without a fight anyway,” Gosselin said.

Support, Plans Advance For Broadband Communications District

Plans and support are advancing for a broadband communications district in the North Country.

As federal stimulus funds are earmarked for the effort that a number of counties and states are eyeing for rural areas, the plan for northern New Hampshire is to get a design in 2021 and begin construction on universal high-speed broadband in 2022.

The project entails building a spine in northern Grafton County that towns can tap into.

“We are making really good progress with the communications district,” said state Rep. Timothy Egan, D-Sugar Hill. “Six towns have committed fully and two other towns are processing the request.”

Towns that have passed warrant articles to allow them to create a communications district, or have articles on the upcoming town meeting ballot, include Bethlehem, Lisbon, Lyman, Sugar Hill, Easton, and Franconia. The towns of Monroe and Littleton are considering it.

“We are working very closely now with the Grafton County Broadband Committee to get them more engaged because they’re thinking big picture, the spine and the communications district building off the spine for the towns,” said Egan. “There is a select board member and a business leader from every town now as part of this communications district committee. We’re excited that people are really pushing and I think we’re now seeing a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel and the possibility that some of these funds from the stimulus will make it easier to get started faster.”

He thanked state Reps. Erin Hennessey, R-Littleton; Jeb Bradley, R-Wolfboro; and Bob Guida, R-Warren, who are advancing legislation to establish a broadband matching grant initiative, Senate Bill 85, a bill that passed the Senate and that Egan said he will support in the House of Representatives.

Building out broadband into rural areas has bipartisan support, with proponents saying universal broadband will improve local economies and public health, improve primary, secondary and higher education, boost area businesses and agriculture, attract more visitors to communities, advance the growing work-from-home culture, and improve the region’s quality of life.

“Our quality of life revolves around structured, sound broadband,” said Egan. “Remote learning, tele-medicine, public safety - those kinds of things are paramount of the community. If you can let farmers download software to fix their tractor, then they don’t have to take their tractor out of the field. If you can let small business owners promote community WiFi, then that’s going to keep tourists walking up and down the street instead of driving to a franchise business to siphon off their WiFi and check their email. If you have broadband, folks in home-based businesses or executives can work from home better and that reduces traffic and creates more local economic development because there are more people willing to do their accounting from out of their house instead of being in Manchester or do their financial services out of their house instead of having to be in Boston. We’ve been pushing for this and a variety of town leaders and community groups are very receptive.”

The next step is seeing which northern Grafton towns allow the district to be created and then seeing how much Grafton County receives in stimulus funding, he said.

Ideally, a design-build plan could be advanced in 2021 so it can get implemented in 2022, said Egan.

“The key is to make this as low cost to the consumer as possible so the towns aren’t on the hook for a big tax implication if they do have to put some money into it,” he said. “Hopefully, they don’t have to put money into it and the price of the product is affordable for to people say ‘I can get local broadband like I get power from Littleton Water and Light.’”

The committee wants to promote competition and choice and wants to let vendors such as Spectrum, the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, and

others get into the game, said Egan.

“Maybe what we’re trying to create isn’t fiber to the doorstep, maybe it’s fiber to the driveway and you can decide for yourself who you want to bring it into your home,” he said. “We’re trying to get all of that done in 2021 so actual construction can happen in 2022 ... If the federal government is saying we can give you money two or three years faster than you thought, it now makes a big difference.”

In July 2020, as stimulus funding became available for states and counties, Gov. Chris Sununu signed into law House Bill 1111, which allows municipalities to determine locations within their borders that are un-served or under-served by a broadband provider and to establish communications districts to build out better service.

Potential funding sources include the Federal Communications Commission’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, known as RDOF, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Bethlehem Development Revives Traffic Safety Concerns

One developing area of town has revived traffic safety concerns among Bethlehem selectmen, who are keeping open the option to write a letter to the state to see what can be done for pedestrian safety.

On March 31, the Bethlehem Planning Board approved the site plan for 12 new overnight cabins at Presidential Mountain Resort, along Route 302/Main Street, between Brook Road and Cherry Valley Road.

The cabins being installed on the north side of the road come in addition to the 15 cabins on the south side that were put up several years ago.

More cabins are planned in the coming years and more people are expected to be crossing the road.

During their meeting on Monday, the board brought up the topic of pedestrian safety and what might be done to reduce the odds of accidents.

“I know some concerns have been brought up throughout the past year or two on that location as it is,” said Board of Selectmen Chairman Gabe Boisseau. “It’s great to see a lot of folks in that area, but there’s a lot of pedestrian traffic in that area and a lot of cars that go through that area relatively quickly. It’s great to see the development, but it seems like there needs to be some kind of solution to help alleviate any concerns or dangers to pedestrians.”

Selectman Chris Jensen, who serves as an ex-officio on the planning board, said PMR owner, Yizchok Rudich is expected to respond to town planners with some ideas on safety.

Boisseau suggested sending a letter to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, an idea supported by Selectman Bruce Caplain.

“I think we should do something and be proactive,” said Caplain. “I think it’s great they are developing it. It adds to our tax base, it gets rid of any eyesore, and brings people to our town. But I don’t want them to be at risk either. On the other side of the road, they will be crossing to go to the pond and activities and whatnot. It would

be good for us to be proactive in reaching out to the state to see if we can push them a little bit.”

Selectman Mary Moritz agreed but said the board should first speak with Rudich and see what his plan for safety is.

“Obviously, it’s in his best interest to see that his guests and clients are safe,” she said. “We can send a letter, but we want to make sure Mr. Rudich is aware and this might be redundant as he could already have a safety plan in place.”

In March, Rudich’s engineer, David Eckman, told planners that ideas include a crosswalk for pedestrians, a flashing yellow light, and a reduction in the speed limit, but with Route 302 being a state road, the state would drive any changes that occur there.

Currently, the speed limit along the segment of the road is 40 mph.

“I do want to make sure it’s on record that people drive fast going through there,” said Moritz. “We have in the past notified DOT of our concern and the speed limit, and their response to that was if we do a traffic study it could in fact increase the speed limit because people don’t follow the current speed limit, which seems absolutely ridiculous to me.”

Boisseau said he recalls a traffic safety letter the town received from the DOT that stated if motorists consistently drive above the speed limit, that could potentially result in the state increasing the speed limit.

Resident Cheryl Jensen agreed with the suggestion of not only putting a digital speed trailer in the area alerting drivers of their speed but also beefing up a police presence.

“I have not seen a police officer staked out there in a couple of years and I used to see it quite often,” she said. “That is another way to enforce the speed limit.”

Resident Chris Daly, who lives near PMR on Rocks Edge Road, where it comes in Miller’s Run Circle, also voiced concerns.

“The road I’m on is a dead-end road,” he said. “For some reason, the patrons of PMR take this right, come bombing in, go up the road and discover they’ve hit a dead-end, and come bombing out. This is a safety issue as well because we have kids out here, and I feel sometimes I can’t let my dogs out because I’m afraid people are going to hit them. This is a private road. This is a safety issue. I don’t know what’s causing this ... It’s been happening for the last three years. I did contact them via email and got no response.”

Daly suggested improved signage to indicate PMR is not on his street, a suggestion supported by selectmen.

The board also considered a noise ordinance waiver from Rudich, the first such waiver request after selectmen approved a new noise ordinance for the town earlier this year.

The ordinance sets quiet hours between 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Rudich asked that the town allow him to begin construction on the cabins before 7 a.m., for about a month-long period.

But some selectmen said the exact length of time and the hour that construction would begin were vague, and Chris Jensen said the purpose of the ordinance is to protect residents from unreasonable noise and asked what’s the point of

Concerns Voiced About Eversource Energy's Power Line Rebuild

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Stirring up for some local residents memories of the Northern Pass Transmission fight, concerns are being voiced about Eversource Energy's proposed upgrades to its right-of-way (ROW) between Northumberland and Whitefield.

Main concerns, some voiced during this week's Lancaster Conservation Commission's meeting, include structures that will be nearly 60 feet tall, about 12 feet higher on average than the current wooden pole height of about 46 feet, as well as little to no information for conservation commissions to sign off on the mitigation funds that are required to be paid by applicants whenever a project has wetlands impacts.

On Thursday, Eversource spokesman William Hinkle said the project is no Northern Pass and is instead a much-needed power line rebuild.

In the past few weeks, company representatives and consultants have met with selectmen in Northumberland, Lancaster, and Whitefield about the plan, which, if state and federal permits are approved, would see construction beginning in August and wrapping up in late 2022 or early 2023.

The line rebuild along 18 miles of ROW entails replacing the wooden H-frame structures that are more than 70 years and deteriorating with weathered steel H-frame structures to get the line up to current regulatory codes and create a more reliable transmission system better able to withstand storms and failures and reduce electric outages and improve safety.

In the project overview presented to the town of Lancaster on April 8, what is called the D142 Whitefield to Northumberland line, with a 115-kilovolt capacity, was built in 1948 and has 202 structures along a 150-foot-wide ROW.

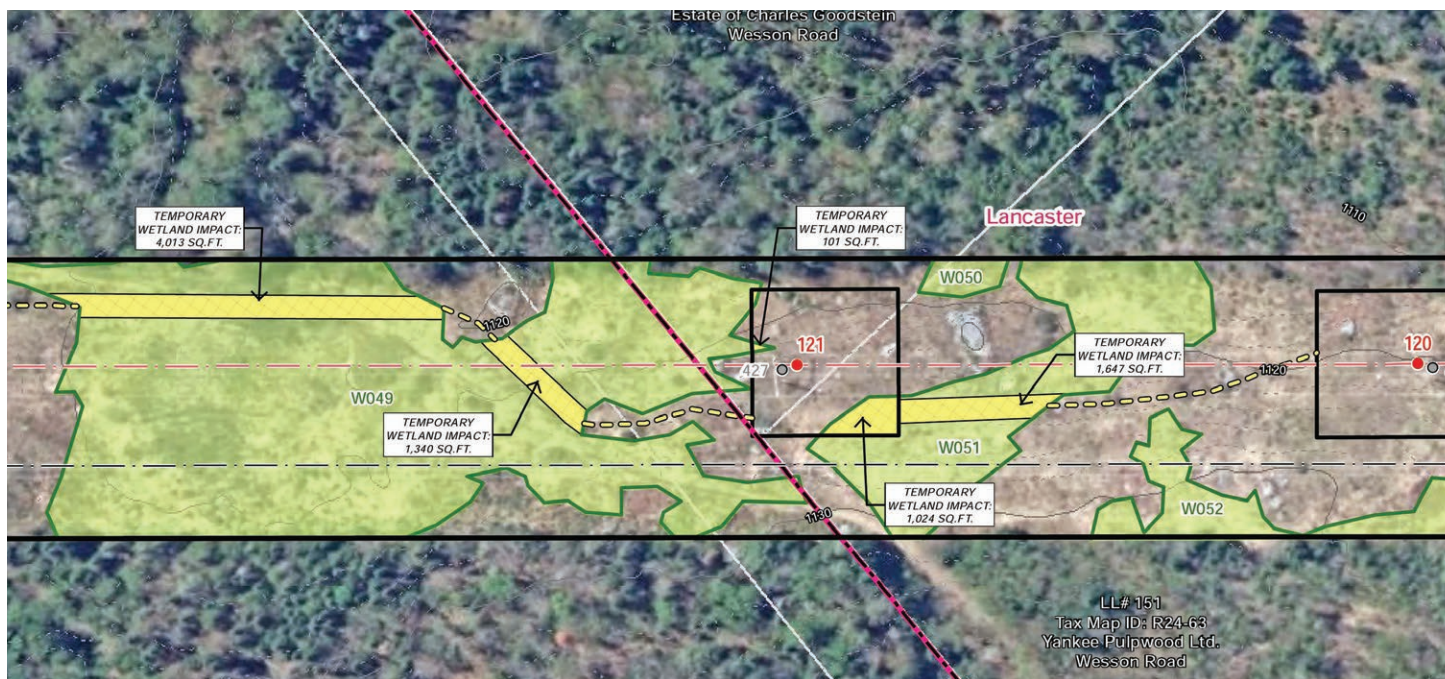
In addition to replacing the structures, Eversource would upgrade communications between substations by replacing the existing communication wire, which the company says is less reliable and secure, with modern optical ground wire (OPGW), a fiber line, that will be installed throughout the transmission system.

The new steel structures would be built to present-day electrical safety standards and code, and the rebuilt line would essentially be in the same location, with some variations.

In Lancaster, there are 63 structures. Nearly 80 percent would be less than 15 feet in increased height. Two that are more than 15 feet in increased height would be within 500 feet of a residence.

Permitting involves applications that will be sent to a number of state and federal agencies, and the project will need wetlands, alteration of terrain, and other permits.

In an April 7 email to the town of Lancaster, project manager Tom Tetreau, of Stantec Engineering, said temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands would result from the project, with temporary impacts coming from timber matting over wetlands to provide access and work pads and permanent impacts from rockfill around the base of three different structures.



Eversource Energy is planning a right-of-way upgrade from Northumberland to Whitefield, a segment of which is pictured here. The plan has elicited some questions and concerns from area residents and conservation commissions. (Courtesy image)

Approximately 2,850 square feet of permanent wetlands impact would occur, 1,900 square feet of which is in Lancaster, wrote Tetreau.

Under state rules, applicants seeking wetlands permits for projects that result in impacts are required to pay money into the state's Aquatic Resources Management (ARM) fund or pay money to qualifying communities if they have local shovel-ready projects.

Concerns In Lancaster

According to Eversource's project narrative, fieldwork and project introduction and stakeholder outreach began in late 2020.

During the Lancaster Conservation Commission meeting on Monday, state Rep. Troy Merner, R-Lancaster, said he was notified about six months ago.

New Lancaster Town Manager Ben Gaetjens-Oleson said the Lancaster town office was notified in December.

Some residents at the LCC meeting said the Eversource plan is news to them.

"I and other people were part of the Northern Pass effort, so the level of trust with Eversource is greatly diminished," said Lancaster resident Linda Bornstein. "We don't trust them. They have not been upfront. So all we would like is for them to be good actors and upfront with all of the information instead of doing this as they are without informing the community."

She said she had to contact the project engineer to find out the new structure height.

"The tower heights coming by our land will be 15 feet higher," said Bornstein. "Fifteen feet is 15 feet visible. That is unacceptable. That's the first thing they did not tell you. Tower heights aren't articulated in this."

LCC Chairman Rob Christie said the commissions' purview in the matter is wetlands and not

structure heights and said his concern is Stantec contacting the LCC and asking the commission to sign off on the mitigation funds without first seeing the state wetlands application.

The wetlands application was delivered to the town late Monday afternoon, unbeknownst to the LCC before its meeting.

"This is a little bit unusual because you usually get to see the wetlands permit application first before you're asked to sign off on the mitigation funds, and we were asked to make a response four days from now," he said.

For Lancaster, Eversource calculates \$7,700 in mitigation funds for altered wetlands at the start of the project and then more money, about \$40,000 to \$50,000, at the end, said Christie.

"The question before us is if we would agree to sign off next Thursday, giving up our right to the \$7,700," said Christie.

LCC members on Monday voted to not sign off without first seeing the wetlands permit application, obtaining more information, and meeting with stakeholders.

On Thursday, Christie told The Caledonian-Record that the commission's plan is to contact the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services within the next 14 days, the time period allowed by statute, and request a 40-day window to review Eversource's application and make comments, with a possible request for another 40-day extension.

Depending on that review, he said he might have concerns about wetlands impacts, but he currently does have concerns about the short notice and what had been a lack of information.

"I felt like they were putting us in a box to sign off on funds before seeing any paperwork," said Christie. "It seemed like it came fast ... and we didn't have the information to accurately respond."

Whitefield

Meeting with company representatives in Whitefield was Selectman Peter Corey, who said the new structures would be higher, but not significantly so.

"Some are less than 15 feet, a couple are slightly above that, and one is 20 feet, and the reason for that is it would allow them to eliminate a pole in a sensitive wetland area," he said Thursday. "I thought it was very carefully planned and it doesn't look like it's going to be a significant change to anything that's currently there, either in terms of visual impacts or number of poles."

Corey said he did voice concerns about staging areas and where they would be placed, about truck traffic and that it not impede traffic Whitefield, about notice and impacts to abutters, and about keeping the town regularly updated.

One idea is that someone from the town meet project engineers every two weeks about where they are and where they're going to be.

"They seemed very accommodating with the concerns I shared and I think they are covering all of the bases," said Corey. "From what I saw, they are being conservative and thoughtful in their approach."

He was also told there would not be any service disruptions because power would be rerouted.

In the end, the upgrades will be a benefit to the community through a more reliable system as well as through more property tax revenue that comes from brand new structures, said Corey.

Eversource

"This is not a new transmission line like the proposed Northern Pass Transmission line was," said Hinkle. "This is a necessary rebuild of an existing power line. Rebuilding the existing power line has nothing to do with Northern Pass."

Eversource works year-round to perform regular

Public Announcement

The Franconia Water Department would like to notify the residents that:

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Mental Health

Continued from Page 4

in-patient care, I would recommend the restoration of bed capacity that has deteriorated over the years. Years ago there were many hospitals willing and able to treat children and adolescent psychiatric patients. Today only New Hampshire Hospital remains among them. We simply need more child and adolescent beds, so that our youth and teens no longer have to wait so many days for the care that they need.”

He continued, “Regarding outpatient services, I would recommend increased funding to community mental health centers so youth may receive timely [treatment]. We need to have a better continuum of care to try and treat youth and teens where they are at, including home-based and school-based care models. We need more mobile crisis units, partial hospitalization programs, and psychiatric treatment facilities to better match the youths needs with the right type, and right setting, of treatment.”

SCHOOLS’ IMPORTANCE

Maureen O’Dea, president of the New Hampshire School Counselors Association, said early interventions were key.

Working with students at a younger age has long-term benefits, she said, but noted that the state’s elementary schools have an average student-to-counselor ratio of 500-to-1.

Touching on the topic of equity, she said the ratio was worse in poorer communities.

“Depending on where you live, where you grow up, you have different access and that’s unfortunate,” she said.

To alleviate those and other issues, New Hampshire schools will receive \$350 million through the latest federal COVID relief package, and those funds can go towards school-based mental health services, Shaheen said.

Heather Moquin, CEO of New Hampshire Hospital, said the pandemic has revealed the important role that schools play in children’s mental health.

“From what we’re seeing from kids that are being referred, it really seems to be a direct correlation to the isolation. We’re just seeing more and more how important that school community is for kids across the state. Anything we can do to support the schools in the long range will help,” she said.

“WHOLE PEOPLE”

Annette Carbonneau, a senior program manager for the North Country Health Consortium, talked about the pandemic’s impact on children in northern New Hampshire, including Coos and Grafton counties.

“We are finding that our youth in the North Country are saying that they are restless. COVID has been hard, they are stressed, they are looking for outlets,” she said.

In order to help local kids, she said, it is important to remove the stigma surrounding mental health. If young people feel comfortable talking about it, they are more likely to access treatment.

“We need to make mental health something we can talk about. If we can get people to talk about mental health the way they talk about having a sore throat, we will then be able to connect people to help,” she said.

Carbonneau and others talked about the wide-ranging factors that contribute to mental health — such as home and food security, social connections, family stability and substance abuse treatment — which have been disrupted by COVID.

She said all those factors were part of the same mental health puzzle, and should be addressed together.

“The concept is we are looking at children, youth, families as whole people. If you’re homeless, that’s going to impact your mental health. If you can’t eat, that’s going to impact your mental health. If you can’t get a dental appointment, that’s going to impact your mental health. All of these pieces,” she said.



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Commission On Humane Treatment Of Animals Re-established

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu has issued an executive order re-establishing a commission on the humane treatment of animals, which prepares a biennial report on animal cruelty cases and legislation.

The commission was last re-established and amended in 2017.

The commission documents animal cruelty-related convictions, proposed bills to ensure the safety and welfare of domestic animals and New Hampshire residents, and changes in statutes.

“Re-establishing the Governor’s Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals ensures that New Hampshire continues our proud and time honored tradition of protecting our pets and animals,” Sununu said in a statement Monday.

Eversource

Continued from Page 7

inspections and conduct any necessary maintenance and upgrades to its system throughout the state to ensure safe and reliable service for customers, he said.

During routine inspections, many of the existing structures along the D142 line were identified to be in poor condition, as was the existing communication between substations that depends on slower communications infrastructure that is less reliable and secure than the optical ground wire being installed elsewhere by Eversource, said Hinkle.

“We intend to rebuild the line in the same location it is today with some variations, including structure locations and heights,” he said. “While structure height increases are unavoidable, we attempted to minimize them wherever possible, while ensuring that we meet current electrical standards, safety clearance requirements, and balancing other important considerations, such as environmental wetland impacts.”

The average height of the new steel H-frame structures will be 58 feet above the ground, to account for new electrical standards, safety clearance requirements, and balancing other considerations, said Hinkle.

The rebuilt power line will replace the existing power line within the same right-of-way, he said.

The Whitefield to Northumberland line rebuild is similar to the Franklin to New Hampton line rebuild project, as both are moving forward based on the results of routine inspections and engineering analysis of the wooden H-frame structures identified to be in poor condition because of age, woodpecker and insect damage, and pole rot said Hinkle.

“We are continuing to inspect our infrastructure throughout the northern region of the state and expect that other projects, much like these, will take place in the years to come as we continue to meet our obligations to maintain a safe and reliable electric system for our customers,” he said.

Similar projects, where the company is rebuilding existing power lines and installing the OPGW that allows its substations to effectively communicate with each other, have taken place on transmission power lines in other areas of the state, including Franklin to Laconia, Goffstown to Hooksett, and Hooksett to Deerfield, said Hinkle.

Presently, the total value for mitigation funds, for the temporary and permanent wetlands impacts along the Whitefield to Northumberland line, has not been finalized.

“It is our intent and preference to work with municipalities by identifying and funding a local, shovel-ready project, but in the event that a local shovel-ready project is not available or commensurate with the mitigation fund impacts, then the alternative is to provide those funds to the state ARM fund,” said Hinkle.

As for the concerns about the 10-day sign-off regarding mitigation money for the Northumberland to Whitefield line, Hinkle said Eversource’s initial outreach to Lancaster by its Stantec consultant was to ensure if a commensurate project was available in town as part of the wetlands permit application.

“Due to the requirement for the project to be shovel-ready, generally projects are identified rather quickly because efforts have been undertaken by the town to get them to the shovel-ready phase,” he said. “We understand the town is seeking additional time for further consideration and we are more than willing to work with them.”

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 - Make airtight
 - Go over again
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 - Playboy
 - Prefix for "trillion"
 - Type of food
 - Sitcom waitress
 - Trailed behind
 - Reduction
 - "Cherchez la —!"
 - Fete
 - Dice spots
 - Boredom
 - Sultan's cousin
 - Coin eater
 - Reclined

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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 - Burrow
 - "Aha!" (2 wds.)
 - Fabric
 - Make mistakes
 - Still snoozing
 - Goes to the polls
 - Puts up
 - Reindeer
 - Reproaches oneself for
 - Zone
 - Hoof it
 - Cleaning fluid
 - Practical question
 - Bakery enticement
 - Suitable
 - Angler's boot
 - Wed in secret
 - Jockey, often
 - Moves toward
 - Famished
 - Kind of wave
 - Rough, like a snake
 - Set on fire
 - Rhine nymph
 - Most uncanny
 - Tome
 - Strut
 - Travel bag
 - Time period
 - Helen, in Spanish
 - Bakers' meas.
 - Ice pellets
 - Puppy chow brand
 - Old Dodge model
 - Strong, as venison
 - Film director — Kazan
 - Mild expletive
 - Wet, soft earth

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Local Woman Named 2021 New Hampshire Beekeeper Of Year

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

For her efforts in helping to keep the state's bee populations healthy, a Littleton resident has been named 2021 New Hampshire Beekeeper of the Year by the New Hampshire Beekeepers Association (NHBA).

A beekeeper for 10 years who has served as the president of the North Country Beekeepers Association and owns White Mountain Apiary, which sells honey products to local stores and restaurants, Janice Mercieri said the honor that was announced several weeks ago at the state association's remote spring meeting was a pleasant surprise.

"I had no idea whatsoever," said Mercieri, who is one of nearly 300 beekeepers in the NHBA and who chairs its membership committee.

The annual nomination involves a selection committee, and criteria for the award, which will become known as the Francis Dodge Award, after longtime NHBA secretary and beekeeper Francis Dodge, include keeping honeybees for at least five years, being an active participant in the NHBA for that same amount of time, showing a willingness to share information with other beekeepers as well as participate in public service relating to beekeeping, and having marketed honey or related products.

"You have to do a lot of public service and public outreach," said Mercieri. "I do a lot of public outreach here in the North Country with schools, gar-

den clubs, and young farmers that are coming up, to teach them about bees ... We try to do as much public education as we can."

Education includes working with active beekeepers to cultivate healthy hives and advising property owners on what they can do, and shouldn't do, to increase healthy wild bee populations.

"This isn't just for honeybees, but for all of the pollinators," said Mercieri.

Protecting bees - unique insects in their own right that produce the honey that many people love and are critical pollinators for agriculture - has become a challenge as bee species in recent decades have faced various sustainability challenges, chief among them a mite that can wreak havoc in hives and cause an annual hive mortality rate of around 50 percent or greater.

This year, the average national winter hive mortality rate was 47 percent, down a little from past years, but still concerning, she said.

"A lot of people have suffered really tragic losses," said Mercieri. "That's why the education of beekeepers is important. A lot of people think you can buy a box, put the bees in them, and the bees will do whatever they do and be fine. Twenty or thirty years ago that might have been the case ... But today, there's just about everything coming at them from every direction."

The Varroa destructor mites that feed on adult honeybees are the direct threat and can decimate a

See **Beekeeper**, Page 13



Janice Mercieri, of Littleton, pictured here in August 2018 tending to her beehives in Littleton, has been named 2021 New Hampshire Beekeeper of the Year. (File photo by Robert Blechl)

News Briefs

Continued from Page 6

the ordinance if the board is going to be granting waivers.

Selectmen agreed that construction beginning at 7 a.m. and not earlier is reasonable and would not delay the construction time because work can continue past 7 p.m. now that the days are getting longer.

They voted 5-0 against granting the waiver.

SAU 36 Approves 5-Day Learning Plan

The White Mountains Regional SAU 36 School Board approved a plan for five-day-a-week learning on April 15.

The plan was OK'd three days before the school district resumes full-time, in-person learning.

The plan, created by the district leadership team, includes a mask mandate for all staff, students and visitors through the end of the school year. Masks will be required at all times unless a person is eating, drinking or taking a scheduled mask break. The mandate will apply to all school district buildings and grounds.

"We will continue to follow this protocol until the end of the school year. This is a non-ne-

gotiable mitigation strategy approved by the WMRSB Board," said Superintendent Marion Anastasia.

Gov. Chris Sununu on April 1 ordered all New Hampshire public K-12 schools to return to full-time, in-person education by April 19.

SAU 36 schools — Lancaster Elementary, Whitefield Elementary and White Mountains Regional High School — had been two days in-person and two days remote, with Wednesdays off to allow for cleaning and planning.

The school district developed its return-to-school plan in less than two weeks.

The re-opening task force met on April 7. Subcommittees met over the next two days, then made recommendations to the task force. Those recommendations covered 10 areas (communications, facilities, health, instruction, transportation/operations, technology, social-emotional learning, sports/co-curricular, foodservice, and human resources). The task force crafted and revised its plan from April 12 to 14.

Their plan covers all facets of education.

Some protocols and procedures are unchanged. Others have been adjusted.

Bus capacity will be increased, and seating limits will increase from one- to two children per seat. Bus drivers will create and maintain daily seating charts and will accommodate children who live alternate days with different parents. Students will still be screened by parents before boarding, fill buses from back to front,

wear masks on the bus, and use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting.

To accommodate more students, facilities will open alternate entryways into buildings, in order to alleviate crowding.

Social distance will continue to be enforced in classrooms, bathrooms and other areas. In the event social distance guidelines cannot be met in classrooms and offices, the school district has a surplus of plexiglass barriers. Students will eat in classrooms, and will either pick up lunches in staggered waves or have food delivered to them.

To maintain air quality buildings will continue to use portable air purifiers with HEPA filters, and operate HVAC systems at suggested levels.

Instead of Wednesdays, schools will be deep cleaned and sanitized on Fridays after school. Buildings must be cleared by 4 p.m. Friday, and cleaning could continue on Saturday morning if needed.

Each school will develop a plan to maintain social distance for academic lockers. Meanwhile, athletic locker rooms will remain closed.

Springs sports will proceed as planned. Athletes and spectators must be masked. Fans for inside events must sit in pods 2 to 4 seats apart.

SAU 36 will not demand the return of remote teaching staff, because a substantial number of students have opted out for the remainder of the school year and will continue to learn from home. The school district will continue to provide meals for remote students.

For more information you can see the complete return to school plan at: www.sau36.org/news/what_s_new/april_19_2021_return_to_school_plan

Whitefield OK's Water, Sewer Rate Increases

WHITEFIELD — Water and sewer bills are going up.

The Board of Selectmen on Monday approved rate hikes that will increase a typical home's combined water and sewer bill by nearly 50%.

The changes take effect July 1.

The biggest increase was to the sewer rate. Connection fees were tripled and the 'per 1,000-gallon' rate was nearly doubled, from \$5.85 to \$10, for the town's 430 sewer system users.

The reason for the sharp increase in the sewer rate? The \$8.49 million sewer treatment plant project, which is slated for completion this spring, and is expected to begin operations in September.

The town must repay two loans on the project, a \$3.56 million USDA bond (first payment due April 21) and a \$1.4 million Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan (first payment due May 1, 2022).

Meanwhile, water rates also went up. Connection fees increased \$3 and the 'per 1,000-gallon' rate

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Obituaries

Sister Irene T. Rivard

Sister Irene T. Rivard was called by her loving God on April 16, 2021, at the age of 89, after 66 years of religious profession as a Daughter of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was born on June 2, 1931, in Newport, Vt. Sister Irene was known to be a very sociable person, being present and taking an interest in each person that entered her life. The definite goal of her life was to "make Jesus Christ known and loved," which is also the mission of our religious congregation.



Sister Irene Rivard

Professionally, Sister taught in various schools in the USA Province, in the states of New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, including Rice Memorial High School, in Burlington, and Sacred Heart High School in Newport, Vt. For several years, Sister Irene was involved in the spiritual formation of young women entering religious life in our congregation. Ultimately, for over 40 years, her mission brought her to Seekonk, Mass., at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish where she became the administrator of a catechetical center serving well over 400 students, grades one to six. Sister also became involved in several pastoral programs in the parish.

Throughout her life, Sister Irene attracted many loyal friends that remained faithful to her to the end. She kept the postal service very busy with all the mail she received from family and friends, not only on major holidays but constantly throughout the year – a real testimony to her simplicity and faithfulness in all her relationships. Everyone enjoyed her keen sense of humor and her ability to tell jokes and make people laugh. Due to age and illness, in 2011, Sister retired at Mount Sacred Heart Convent in Littleton, N.H. Sister Irene is predeceased by her father, Onesime C. Rivard of Newport, Vt., her mother, Diana M. Rivard (Jacques) formerly of Southbridge, Mass., her brother, Normand and her sister-in-law, Theresa Rivard of Newport, Vt.

She is survived by her brother, Msgr. Roland Rivard of Winooski, Vt., her brother, Maurice Rivard of Slingerland, N.Y., a step-sister, Lee Rutz of York, Maine, a step-sister-in-law, Alice Preseault of Irasburg, Vt., a step-niece, Lori Leblanc, of Irasburg, Vt., step-sister-in-law, Pat Morin and step-niece, of Burlington, Vt., and a cousin, Rita Deslandes of Troy, Vt. The Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus remain grateful for the loving care Sister Irene received during her illness by the staff at Mount Sacred Heart Convent in Littleton, N.H., and

the Holy Cross Health Care Center in Manchester, N.H.

Go in peace, Sister Irene and rejoice in the love of a life well lived and be received by your loving God, your grateful family, friends, and by all the Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who have gone before you. We miss you greatly.

There will be a Mass of Christian Burial on April 27 at 11 a.m. at St. Rose of Lima Church, 77 Clay St. Littleton, N.H. The burial will take place in St. Mary's Cemetery in Newport, Vt. on May 6 at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations in Sister Irene's memory may be made to the Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 226 Grove St. Littleton, NH 03561.

The Ross Funeral Home in Littleton, NH is in charge of arrangements. To offer condolences, please visit www.rossfuneral.com.

Wayland George Brill

Wayland George Brill, 74, passed away on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at his home in Lyndonville, Vt.

Wayland was born on Nov. 29, 1946 in a brick house in North Kirby, Vt., the son of George and Julia (Park) Brill.

Wayland was not known as a man who would sit still or stay in one place for too long. He will most likely be remembered as a reliable and caring resource to family, friends, and neighbors. He would help anyone, at any time, with any issue.

He worked several different jobs throughout his life. He was a farmer first and foremost. He loved sugaring with the family horses and seeing people gathered in the sugarhouse for sugar-on-snow parties, featuring maple boiled eggs. He often volunteered or worked part-time with the road commissioner of North Kirby. He also worked at Wheeler's, Tap and Die and Northeast Tool as a machinist, and for the State of Vermont Department of Corrections as a correctional officer. Wayland served his country over a span of six years with the Vermont Army National Guard. Some of his favorite pastimes included fishing at Memphremagog, and hunting for deer. He also greatly enjoyed running rabbit dogs in the winter months.

Wayland was a devoted husband and father. He and his wife enjoyed spending time together, and planning for their family's milestone moments like their children's birthday celebrations, which always included a special dinner out and shopping. He took great joy in activities such as Boy Scouts and camping with his son David, and going on



Wayland Brill

school field trips to Button Bay and Grand Manon in Canada with his daughter, Kristine. In later years, he adored his grandchildren and loved to spend time with them. He took great pride in the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Cynthia (VanOstrand) Brill; son, David George Brill of Bethlehem, N.H.; daughter Kristine Amy Brill of St. Johnsbury, Vt.; sister, Rosalie Donaghy and husband, Dale of Lyndonville, Vt.; sister/aunt Isabelle Monahan of Milford, N.H.; two grandchildren, Noah David Brill and Sara Shannon McCaffrey; sisters-in-law Shirley Brill of Sutton, Vt., and June Hall of Lyndonville, Vt., as well as several cousins, nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his parents, George and Julia Brill, and brothers, Stanley Brill and Harland Brill.

A graveside service is being planned and be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family is asking for contributions to be made, in Wayland's name, to Lyndon State Rescue Squad, PO Box 401, Lyndonville, VT 05851.

Memories and condolences may be shared with the family at www.guibordfh.com.

Gary E. Holbrook

Gary E. Holbrook, 75, of Derby, Vt., passed away, with family by his side, on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H.

Gary was born in St. Albans, Vt. on March 3, 1946, to William and Ruth (Macarther) Holbrook. He liked watching old Western movies. He enjoyed auto racing, remote controlled car racing, and building race engines and cars.

Survivors include two sons: Kevin Holbrook and partner, Cyndi Kenney, of St. Johnsbury, Vt., and William Holbrook and wife, Amanda, of Concord, Vt.; a daughter: Karen Holbrook Coon of Swanton, Vt.; brother: Peter Holbrook of St. Albans, Vt.; Kevin and Karen's mother: Sherry Holbrook of Swanton, Vt.; William's mother: Dora Holbrook of Colebrook, N.H.; his companion: Rachida Marvin of Derby, Vt.; six grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his parents: William and Ruth Holbrook; brother: David Holbrook; and daughter-in-law: Kimberly Mins-hull Holbrook.

A celebration of life will be happening at a later time.

Donations to help the family with funeral costs can be made at saylesfh.com or mailed to Sayles Funeral Home, 525 Summer St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819.

Memories and condolences may be shared with the family online at www.saylesfh.com.

Theresa Beatrice (Lesperance) Reynolds

Theresa Beatrice (Lesperance) Reynolds, 91, a recent resident of the Grafton Coun-

ty Nursing Home in North Haverhill and formerly of Elm Street in Woodsville, died unexpectedly on Monday, April 12, 2021 at Cottage Hospital, Woodsville.

Theresa was born in Berlin, N.H. on June 28, 1929 to Henry Joseph and Beatrice (Tardif) Lesperance. On April 19, 1952, she married Robert R. Reynolds. They moved to Woodsville in 1964 when Bob was transferred to Armour & Co.

Theresa worked for several businesses in the North Country including the Aeronautical Icing Research Laboratory in Milan, N.H., and Brown Paper Company, Local Union # 75, and Jacobs Insurance Company, all in Berlin. Locally she was employed for many years at both the Grafton County Register of Deeds office and the Grafton County Probate office in North Haverhill.

Theresa was a communicant at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Woodsville. In retirement, she was an accomplished seamstress and was a talented cake baker and decorator, making cakes for weddings, showers, and birthdays.

She was predeceased by her husband, Robert Reynolds on Oct. 22, 1985; her sister, Jeanine Lessard on Oct. 20, 2012; her brother in law, Norbert Lessard on Feb. 1, 2015; a great great grandson, Aiden Watts in November 2018; and her cousin Pauline Bourassa.

Theresa is survived by her children, Debra R. Stack and husband Robert of Lecanto, Fla., and Bradley J. Reynolds, Sr. and wife Janice of Monroe, N.H.; seven grandchildren, Bradley J. Reynolds, Jr., Laura Reynolds, Amy Reynolds, Robert Stack, Christi Doll, Jason Ward and Brandon Ward; 10 great grandchildren, Kingston, Kiera, Maddox and Easton Reynolds, Lily Clouse, Robbie and Alaina Stack, and Kaylee, Avah and Gunnar Ward; three great-great-grandchildren, Bobbie and Camden Stack and Isabella Watts; along with nieces and nephews.

There will be a calling hour on Thursday, April 29, from 6-7 p.m. at Ricker Funeral Home, 1 Birch Street, Woodsville.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be on Friday, April 30, at 10 a.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 15, Pine Street, Woodsville with Father Maria Sebastian Susairaj, HGN officiating.

Burial will be in the New City Cemetery, East Milan Road, Berlin, N.H. at 1 p.m.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Joseph Catholic Church, 21 Pine Street, Woodsville, NH 03785 or to Salve Regina Academy, 151 Emery Street, Berlin, NH 03570.

For more information, or to offer an online condolence, please visit www.rickerfh.com.

Ricker Funeral Home & Cremation Care of Woodsville is in charge of arrangements.



Theresa Reynolds

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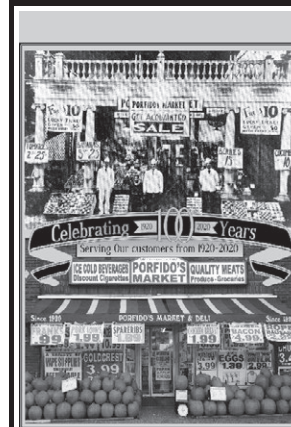
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Beekeeper

Continued from Page 10

hive.

(Other threats include habitat fragmentation and loss, insecticides and pesticides, and climate change that impacts native plant species, all making for what is called bee colony collapse).

Recent research shows the mites suck not the bees' blood, but their fat bodies that regulate their temperature, give the bees their sense of direction, and are crucial for their overall health, said Mercieri.

"By losing their fat bodies, they become more susceptible to other viruses and diseases," she said. "It really weakens them."

As 2021 New Hampshire Beekeeper of the Year, Mercieri will continue all the more in education efforts.

"I have some pretty big shoes to fill," she said. "I have always looked up to those beekeepers in the years before me and really admire them for the projects they are doing."

As for mortality rates and education, New Hampshire is getting better, but can do more, she said.

In addition to her membership in the NHBA, Mercieri is a member of every state beekeepers association in New England as well as a member of the Eastern Agricultural Society, a national organization, and the American Beekeeping Federation.

With her husband, Joe, she tends to dozens of hives housing several million honeybees.

Mercieri said the current total NHBA membership of nearly 300 indicates a positive trend.

"This year, it has grown quite a bit," she said. "I think more people are home and they want to learn how to bee keep and be more sustainable."

In addition to educating others, New Hampshire beekeepers provide honey to local restaurants and food cooperatives, thereby helping to grow the farm-to-table culture.

The NHBA is now collecting data on winter hive survival rates through a survey that will be open to all beekeepers in the state until April 30.

The data will be compared with mortality data collected in the past several years.

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Cyan Magenta Yellow Black

Littleton

Continued from Page 2

can have a discussion, if needed, with the Board of Selectmen on the 26th.”

Gleason and McQuillen made the decision in consultation with deputy Littleton health officer Joanna Ray.

The decision at the state level to lift the mask mandate was made after considering the reduction in fatality and hospitalization rates in comparison to those rates in the autumn of 2020, McQuillen said in the written administrative decision for Littleton.

“In regards to the Littleton area, we have seen a significant increase in COVID positive rates, and statewide hospitalization rates are increasing compared to one month ago,” he said.

The governor’s decision does not prevent or limit the ability of private businesses and local municipalities from requiring mask use, and the town of Littleton will continue to require the wearing of masks to enter any town building or workplace, he said.

Littleton employees, once in a town building, are free to not wear a mask if they can socially distance themselves from others.

All vendors, visitors and members of the public, though, will be required to wear a face-covering upon entering a municipal building.

How long the local mandate will last is undetermined.

“This directive will remain in place until such time as the infection rates fall and the number of citizens that are vaccinated increases to a level that will greatly limit the spread and infection rate of the COVID virus,” said McQuillen.

The Littleton School District is looking to keep its mask policy in place.

Milton Bratz, the newly appointed selectman who was reappointed this week as the town health officer after serving as interim town manager, said he received a call at noon on Friday from Littleton School

District SAU 84 Superintendent William Hart, who said he wanted to maintain the mask order in the town’s schools.

“I said I would be all for that,” said Bratz. “If the caseload wasn’t going up, it would be understandable, but statewide the cases are going up and the number of people in the hospital is going up.”

On Friday afternoon, Hart issued a letter to parents informing them that it is his intention to recommend to the school board during their meeting on Monday that the school district’s mask requirement remain in place.

At Lakeway Elementary School, he said there are five student positive cases and two staff cases, with eight students in quarantine and one staff member quarantined.

At Daisy Bronson Middle School and Littleton High School, there are seven student cases, with 25 students in quarantine and one staff member in quarantine.

As for the high level of Littleton cases, The Caledonian-Record was not able to confirm if a super-spreader event or several spreader events in town led to the rise.

Bratz said the case increase could at least partly be attributable to the COVID-19 B1.1.7 variant, which is more contagious.

Ed Duffy, chief medical officer at Littleton Regional Healthcare, said the current case total in Littleton is significant and the B1.1.7 strain is playing a role.

“There is a high level of cases, actually much higher than any time previously during the pandemic,” he said. “Our drive-through testing results show that positive cases have doubled since the Christmas spike.”

Statewide data is similar, he said.

“The B1.1.7 strain is in the community and certainly plays a factor,” said Duffy. “This strain, which does not cause more severe disease or have an increased ability to elude the vaccine, is 50 to 70 percent more infectious. More infectiousness leads to more infections increasing the opportunity for the virus to cause disease, therefore increasing the number of those with severe disease and potential deaths. Another

factor is pandemic fatigue. It is clearly playing a role, especially with younger folks.”

In a note to residents on Friday, LRH representatives said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has concluded masks are effective in slowing community transmission, and while the governor’s mask mandate expired Friday, it doesn’t prevent businesses or municipalities from requiring masks.

Like other hospitals, LRH will continue its mask requirements in all of its buildings for the health and safety of all, they said.

Carrie Gendreau, chair of the Littleton Board of Selectmen, supports the municipal mask mandate.

“I think it would be advantageous to continue,” said Gendreau.

By Friday evening, Littleton’s caseload had dropped 44, still close to an all-time high.

In the past two weeks alone, Littleton had 65 new cases, more than one-quarter of its 232 total cumulative cases since the pandemic began.

A year into the pandemic, many people have “COVID fatigue,” but now is not the time to become lax, said Gleason.

“One, follow the science, and two, if we can see the finish line, let’s not do anything to mess up,” he said.

The next nearest town with a high number of active confirmed cases is Haverhill, at 28.

Bethlehem had 13 on Friday, Lyman 13, and Lancaster seven.

The town offices in Bethlehem are still by appointment only and that is likely to continue because of the high caseload in that community, said Bethlehem Fire Chief Jack Anderson.

In speaking with one Bethlehem selectman, the consensus by the board is to keep the municipal mask mandate, he said.

“I think they are going to maintain the mask mandate for a while and see where that goes,” said Anderson. “I think it will be good for another couple of weeks. Most people are wearing their masks, anyway.”

News Briefs

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jumped 16%, from \$6.55 to \$7.65. Those changes affect the town’s 648 water customers.

The town continues to repay a \$3.6 million rural development loan for various water system improvements including water main replacements, pump station improvements, and new town-wide water meters.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Overall, once the water and sewer rate hikes take effect, a household with a standard 5/8 inch meter and using 72,000 gallons annually would see their annual water and sewer bill go up to \$634, from \$1,292.80 to \$1,916.80.

The impact will be significant for some.

The Mountain View Grant hotel has a four-inch meter and their sewer bill alone is expected to increase from \$13,600 to \$23,575 annually, according to Select Board member Shawn White.

In addition, White said, his household water and sewer bill will increase from approximately \$500 to \$1,700.

“This is hitting all of us,” he said, adding that concerned residents should curb their water consumption. “We are in control of how much water we use. I’m getting a better shower head that uses less water. There are avenues we can look at, to save how much we use.”

Whitefield resident Mark Saffian asked if the town would provide financial assistance for low-income and fixed-income households.

Select Board member Peter Corey said nothing specific was planned, noting that the town’s water rates were “certainly not the lowest and certainly not the highest” in the state.

Saffian suggested the town create a grading system to apply for abatement and Corey replied the town already offers public assistance, and residents in financial distress could apply for that.

When asked if the town should create a village district to manage and vote on water and sewer issues, White said the system had its “pluses” and “minuses,” and Corey added that a village district would create another layer of government bureaucracy.

In addition to the rate change, the town will switch from a semi-annual to a quarterly billing cycle.

That is being done as part of a water conservation program. Quarterly billing will increase the town’s ability to monitor for, and catch, leaks in the system.

HISTORY

The Whitefield sewer plant project was set in motion in 2015.

That’s when the town was notified by the EPA that it was in violation of its discharge permits into the John’s River. EPA issued an administrative order, which could have led to fines, and was given a timeline to correct the situation, Corey said.

The town worked with Horizons Engineering and the state Department of Environmental Services to plan for the replacement of the wastewater treatment plant.

In 2017, the town submitted a USDA Rural Development grant application and was approved for a \$6.5 million project, of which \$2.9 million was grant-funded. Months later town meeting approved the project.

Upon further review by the Department of Environmental Services, it was determined it would take an additional \$1.6 million to build a suitable plant for the town. Town meeting voters granted permission for the added funds.

The town must now repay the USDA bond of \$3.56 million over the next 27 years at an interest rate of 1.25% and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan of \$1.4 million at a rate of 2% over the next 30 years (which includes \$190,000 in loan forgiveness).

“That brings us to where we are today. We have known this day was coming. We knew we would have to raise the rates for the bond payments. The rates are basically figured at looking at debt service and operating costs and spreading it over the number of users, which are 430 sewer users, and calculating it out determines our debt requirements,” Corey said. “The treatment plant is nearly complete. The testing phase should begin in June, and we should go completely online in September at which time we will be able to operate the septage receiving station and generate income and offset some of these costs.”



Because of the high number of COVID cases in Littleton, the town of Littleton and Littleton Regional Healthcare, whose hospital representatives are seen here Friday with donations of snacks and drinks from Littleton schools for LRH staff at the hospital’s vaccination and testing site, are continuing their mask mandates. (Courtesy photo)

News Briefs

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Lisbon Voters Avert A Budget Disaster

LISBON — Lisbon Regional School voters during the annual town meeting on Tuesday were presented with an unusual twist - two budgets for the 2021-2022 school year.

One was proposed by the school board, and, as it later turned out, had to be upwardly amended at town meeting to avoid blowing a big hole in the budget and creating a crisis in meeting expenses.

The other was a petitioned warrant article submitted by nearly 60 Lisbon residents angered about last year's \$3 local school tax rate spike.

The spike came after the state determined that a one-time payment of nearly \$400,000 returned to the school district counted as an appropriation after the school board, on the advice of the former SAU 35 superintendent and former business manager, put it into the buildings and grounds capital reserve fund to pay for future projects without impacting the tax rate.

That determination by the state led to a Lisbon local school tax rate jump in November from \$17 to \$20.03 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation (and an increase in the Lyman local school rate from \$12.35 to \$13.56).

The petitioned article asked voters to reduce the total appropriation for the 2021-2022 fiscal year

budget to approximately 10 percent less than the warrant article for the 2020-2021 fiscal year (ending June 30) and cap the total 2021-2022 appropriation at no more than \$6,420,820.

At the start of Tuesday's meeting, town moderator John Northrop, after speaking with the school legal counsel, laid out the problems with the petition and offered a proposal to voters - permanently table the petitioned article (Article 4), which he said poses tricky legal issues, and agree to amend the school board's budget article (Article 5).

"In effect, we have two appropriation articles," he said. "The petitioned article does not have a clear budget number. If passed, it would lead to conflicts between the two budget-related articles and require litigation to determine the outcome of the meeting for a final district budget. Also, if both articles four and five pass then we will have articles in conflict with one another and we may be asked to raise both appropriation articles ..."

Secondly, Article 4 is confusing and has inaccuracies, said Northrop.

"It has not clearly stipulated a proposed budget number," he said. "As written, it states approximately 10 percent less the article of the fiscal year 2020-2021 ... So we don't have a clear appropriations number with it ... If we use Article 4, it will be problematic, I've been told ... I'm going to propose a way forward, but it's up to the voters and not me."

As for Article 5, it was written by the board with a total general fund appropriation amount of \$6.325 million for the 2021-2022 school year.

But school board chairman Owen Clark said that figure needs to have \$540,000 in federal funding

added to it through the amendment in order to spend the budget.

The reason for the amendment is the board made an error and didn't include \$160,000 in the federal school lunch program it will receive and \$380,000 in federal grants, both of which are not involved in setting the tax rate.

Although the amendment would bring the total gross budget appropriation to \$6.865 million, the amount to be raised by taxation would still be \$6,325,238.

Since the November tax rate spike and a tense school board meeting in January with residents voicing their anger, Clark said LRS principal Jackie Daniels worked to reduce the proposed 2021-2022 school year budget, which takes effect July 1.

That budget factors in the elimination of 4 1/2 staffing positions at a cost savings of \$388,693.

"We were approached by numerous townspeople during numerous board meetings, budget hearings and social media with the thought that roughly \$3 was stolen, that the tax rate was something we stole from the town," he said. "Jackie, through her work, was trying to find a way to get to three bucks ... We essentially got to the \$3. That's where that number [\$6.325 million] came from. Jackie cut roughly \$412,000 out of the budget."

And with built-in expenses of about \$170,000, the actual total cut was about \$600,000, said Clark.

The proposed budget with the amendment represents a 6.13-percent decrease from the previous budget and reduces the fiscal year 2022 combined state and local school tax rate for Lisbon to an estimated \$19.19 (down from \$22.10) and reduces the

2022 state and local rate for Lyman to an estimated \$11.63 (down from \$14.08).

Resident Jan Carver suggested approving not the amendment with the \$540,000 in federal funding added, but the \$6.325 million budget as written.

Current SAU 35 business manager Toni Butterfield said if that were to pass, the school would have to cut the proposed budget by \$540,000.

"We cut a significant amount from the budget, and to come up with another \$500,000, which is close to what we already cut, is in my opinion, not achievable," said Clark. "If that passes, we're in trouble. This is what we had to do to get to where we are now, and I don't know how we can go any further ... As a board chair, I strongly encourage, request, and beg of you to pass the \$6,865,238 because we've already taken too much out of this budget."

In the end, near the close of the hour-long meeting and following a budget presentation, the vast majority of voters placed their trust in Northrop and the school board and voted to indefinitely table Article 4 and add the amendment to Article 5 (bringing the total gross budget to \$6,865,238) and approve it for the 2021-2022 school year.

After the meeting, Daniels said Lisbon Regional School voters have always supported the school and Tuesday's town meeting was an example of that and of how voters found a way to move beyond a budget challenge to continue supporting the community's students.

The K-12 Lisbon Regional School serves some 320 students, down from a student population of 360 last year.

Schools

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tinue to have mask use ... It was something that was already in place and we thought it was easy to continue. We can have a discussion, if needed, with the Board of Selectmen on the 26th."

Gleason and McQuillen made the decision in consultation with deputy Littleton health officer Joanna Ray.

The decision at the state level to lift the mask mandate was made after considering the reduction in fatality and hospitalization rates in comparison to those rates in the autumn of 2020, McQuillen said in the written administrative decision for Littleton.

"In regards to the Littleton area, we have seen a significant increase in COVID positive rates, and statewide hospitalization rates are increasing compared to one month ago," he said.

The governor's decision does not prevent or limit the ability of private businesses and local municipalities from requiring mask use, and the town of Littleton will continue to require the wearing of masks to enter any town building or workplace, he said.

Littleton employees, once in a town building, are free to not wear a mask if they can socially distance themselves from others.

All vendors, visitors and members of the public, though, will be required to wear a face-covering upon entering a municipal building.

How long the local mandate will last is undetermined.

"This directive will remain in place until such time as the infection rates fall and the number of citizens that are vaccinated increases to a level that will greatly limit the spread and infection rate of the COVID virus," said McQuillen.

The Littleton School District is looking to keep its mask policy in place.

Milton Bratz, the newly appointed selectman who was reappointed this week as the town health officer after serving as interim town manager, said he received a call at noon on Friday from Littleton School District SAU 84 Superintendent William Hart, who said he wanted to maintain the mask order in the town's schools.

"I said I would be all for that," said Bratz. "If the caseload wasn't going up, it would be understandable, but statewide the cases are going up and the number of people in the hospital is going up."

On Friday afternoon, Hart issued a letter to parents informing them that it is his intention to recommend to the school board during their meeting on Monday that the school district's mask requirement remain in place.

At Lakeway Elementary School, he said there are five student positive cases and two staff cases, with eight students in quarantine and one staff member quarantined.

At Daisy Bronson Middle School and Littleton High School, there are seven student cases, with 25 students in quarantine and one staff member in quarantine.

As for the high level of Littleton cases, The Caledonian-Record was not able to confirm if a

super-spreader event or several spreader events in town led to the rise.

Bratz said the case increase could at least partly be attributable to the COVID-19 B1.1.7 variant, which is more contagious.

Ed Duffy, chief medical officer at Littleton Regional Healthcare, said the current case total in Littleton is significant and the B1.1.7 strain is playing a role.

"There is a high level of cases, actually much higher than any time previously during the pandemic," he said. "Our drive-through testing results show that positive cases have doubled since the Christmas spike."

Statewide data is similar, he said.

"The B1.1.7 strain is in the community and certainly plays a factor," said Duffy. "This strain, which does not cause more severe disease or have an increased ability to elude the vaccine, is 50 to 70 percent more infectious. More infectiousness leads to more infections increasing the opportunity for the virus to cause disease, therefore increasing the number of those with severe disease and potential deaths. Another factor is pandemic fatigue. It is clearly playing a role, especially with younger folks."

In a note to residents on Friday, LRH representatives said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has concluded masks are effective in slowing community transmission, and while the governor's mask mandate expired Friday, it doesn't prevent businesses or municipalities from requiring masks.

Like other hospitals, LRH will continue its

mask requirements in all of its buildings for the health and safety of all, they said.

Carrie Gendreau, chair of the Littleton Board of Selectmen, supports the municipal mask mandate.

"I think it would be advantageous to continue," said Gendreau.

By Friday evening, Littleton's caseload had dropped 44, still close to an all-time high.

In the past two weeks alone, Littleton had 65 new cases, more than one-quarter of its 232 total cumulative cases since the pandemic began.

A year into the pandemic, many people have "COVID fatigue," but now is not the time to become lax, said Gleason.

"One, follow the science, and two, if we can see the finish line, let's not do anything to mess up," he said.

The next nearest town with a high number of active confirmed cases is Haverhill, at 28.

Bethlehem had 13 on Friday, Lyman 13, and Lancaster seven.

The town offices in Bethlehem are still by appointment only and that is likely to continue because of the high caseload in that community, said Bethlehem Fire Chief Jack Anderson.

In speaking with one Bethlehem selectman, the consensus by the board is to keep the municipal mask mandate, he said.

"I think they are going to maintain the mask mandate for a while and see where that goes," said Anderson. "I think it will be good for another couple of weeks. Most people are wearing their masks, anyway."

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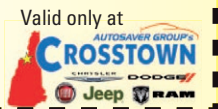


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