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The Charlotte News

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Charlotte Beach. Photo by Lee Krohn

Alpine skiers capture two state championships



Mid March saw the CVU High School Alpine skiers capture two state championships. Two days of giant slalom races (the first at Cochran's, the second at Smugglers Notch) proved to be the tipping points for both men's and women's teams. For the men it was the first ever Alpine championship. For the women, it was the first in nearly 20 years. **Read more on page 13**

Photo by Chris Boffa

News from the News

John Quinney
INTERIM PUBLISHER AND PRESIDENT

We have learned that Kim MacQueen will not be joining *The Charlotte News* as our interim editor. We wish Kim all the best as she focuses her attention on the needs of her family.

We'd like to give a special thank you to Junior Tuiqere, who volunteered to deliver *The Charlotte News* to area businesses for the past year. Junior has returned to his rugby coaching job at Middlebury College and no longer has time for the deliveries.

We will miss Junior's steady efforts. But we also look at it this way: What a great volunteer opportunity for a successor! If you could spare an hour or two every two weeks and would like to help out by picking up a bunch of papers at the Senior Center every second Thursday and dropping them at 11 locations around town, please send an email to news@thecharlottenews.org, or give us a call at (802) 425-4949. Thank you!

Producing this edition of the paper has fallen largely to Anna Cyr, our managing editor. We are most grateful to Anna for seeking out and working with the writers who sent articles for this edition of the *News*. This work was on top of her normal responsibilities—which include ad design, paper layout, newsletter production and distribution, and website updates. Phew!



Anna Cyr

Anna loves her work, and she loves the paper; it shows in the pages of every issue. She is a talented graphic designer who also brings a professional, hard-working, well-organized and efficient approach to her work. Not to mention a friendly and collegial presence with a dash of humor.

For their contributions to this edition, we want to express appreciation to Bob Bloch, Nancy Richardson, Molly McClaskey, Cyndy Marshall, Margo Bartsch, Edd Merritt, Beth Merritt, Christy Hagios, Mike Yantachka, Peter Joslin, Kim Findlay, John Hammer, Elizabeth Hunt, Ethan Putnam, Ethan Tapper, Phyl Newbeck, Carolyn Kulick, Margaret Woodruff, Alex Bunten, Katherine Arthaud, Vince Crockenberg, Dean Bloch, Jim Hyde, Linda Radimer and Mary Van Vleck.

As I've said before, it takes a village. And it has for the past 60 years.

Moving forward—editorial committee announced

Over the past few weeks, *The Charlotte News* has been the subject of critical public attention. We could take issue with some of what has been written, or omitted, but we won't. Because what matters most is not what happened, but that we draw from these experiences to craft a path forward for the paper and the organization.

Planning Commission Looks to the Future

Nancy Richardson
CONTRIBUTOR

The April 1 Planning Commission meeting focused on a process for the next round of amendments to the Land Use Regulations. This process is required because of the mixed results of Town Meeting Day votes. Planner Larry Lewak is updating these amendments and will be posting them on the town website soon. Larry will also summarize all needed zoning amendments and present them to the Commission for prioritized action.

Marty Illick stated that there is a need for a broader discussion with the public about the demographic concerns that underly the need to ease current land regulations. The thought is that the Regional Planning Commission and those from towns that have successfully developed diverse housing projects might assist Charlotte in developing a more successful communication plan. Illick stated that revisiting density for village districts should be a priority of the work. A staff planner from the Chittenden Regional Planning Commission and the Richmond Zoning Commissioner will be invited to the next meeting to discuss public engagement.

A new manual published by the State of Vermont last year was recommended as a guide to Vermont towns on how to ease restrictive zoning for more diverse housing types. The guide is entitled: *Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods*.

In other business, The Planning Commission approved a six-month extension for the proposed Boundary Adjustment Sketch Plan Review for the Charlotte Family Health Center.

Zoning Board Debates Spear's Store Details

Ethan Putnam
COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE

Spear's Corner Store was once again the topic of discussion at this past week's Zoning Board meeting.

While still embroiled in a wastewater permit dispute, Carrie Spear and her lawyer, Liam Murphy, came before the board to ask for changes to a conditional use approval granted on Feb. 22 that allows for the addition of a deli and a new wastewater system.

The board had previously voted to reconsider the approval at their March 10 meeting, after Murphy, on behalf of Spear, sent a letter to the board requesting changes to the language of the approval.

The first item was related to the phrasing of the ownership and operation of the store and the deli. Murphy asked to have the word "owned" omitted from "owned and operated" because he wanted to leave open the possibility of someone owning the retail store, while someone else owned the deli.

Stuart Bennett, vice chair of the board, pushed back, saying that such an arrangement would be akin to Charlotte Crossings, where it would "turn the building into effectively a multi-operation commercial business."

Murphy argued that those cases weren't the same, since the store and deli were connected.

The following changes that Murphy and Spear wanted were related to the maximum number of employees allowed and the maximum hours of operation.

The initial permit capped the store to three employees and limited business to seven days a week from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"I think [outdoor dining] is a good thing. I mean, that's what towns are all about, gathering places and sharing stories and supporting local businesses, and I think we should support this."

— Mike Dunbar
Owner of Charlotte Crossings

Murphy pointed out that a business can have many more employees on the payroll than work at the business at the same time. With the deli, there may be need in the future for more than three employees on shift at the same time.

"There may be times when they need more than that. There could be prep workers, somebody who is not out front, they're a baker or whatever. And our wastewater system is approved for six employees. We're asking that we would be allowed to have a maximum of six employees working at one time," Murphy said.

Murphy and Spear also wanted to extend the

News from *the News*

NEWS

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Molly McClaskey writes in her letter to the editor on this page, about a paper that “walks a fine and intentional line, cultivating stories from our neighbors and town acquaintances, as well as rigorous, in-depth and of course balanced reporting of town affairs, emergencies, events and town meetings that affect our daily lives.”

That’s where the path leads. That’s the focus of our work.

In that spirit, I’m pleased to announce that our editorial committee has been launched. Over the next few weeks, we will:

Complete a proposal to reorganize the newsroom, to include:

- positions to be filled by staff or

volunteers, roles and responsibilities of each newsroom member, and the estimated annual cost of the reorganization.

- Draft a set of guidelines for board members, publisher, editors and reporters, that sets clear lines of authority and supervision among the board and staff while protecting and preserving editorial independence.
- Adopt a code of journalistic ethics.
- Approve a conflict of interest policy to govern public disclosures and workplace relationships among board members, editors and reporters (including community members) who are related to each other as family.

We are thankful to Vince Crockenberg, our former, longtime president and publisher who is leading this work, and to committee

members Peter Richardson and Katherine Arthaud. I will provide support as an ex officio member of the committee.

We’re thankful also to each of the community members, volunteers and seasoned business and nonprofit leaders who have talked with us over the past couple of weeks. We appreciate the gift of your time and your concerns as you offer thoughtful advice and wise counsel.

It is obvious from the events of the past few weeks, the conversations, phone calls and emails, that, although we may disagree on much, we all have one thing in common—we care deeply about this paper and the community it serves.

To that end, you will be able to count on the paper, our weekly e-newsletter and our website updates to keep you up to date and informed.



The Charlotte News

Mission Statement

The mission of *The Charlotte News* is to inform our readers about current events, issues and topics, and to serve as a forum for the free exchange of views of town residents and community volunteer organizations on matters related to Charlotte and the lives of its residents.

Editorial independence

The Board of Directors retains full authority over all editorial and advertising content in *The Charlotte News*. While we are funded by advertising revenue and donor contributions, our news judgments are made in accordance with our mission and independent of all sources of financial support, including support given through our affiliated 501(c)3 organization, The Friends of *The Charlotte News*.

Letters, Commentaries and Obituaries

Consistent with our mission *The Charlotte News* publishes letters to the editor, commentaries and obituaries from our readers. All letters, commentaries and obituaries are subject to review and approval by the news editor of the paper and to the following rules and standards:

- Letters to the editor, commentaries and obituaries should be emailed to news@thecharlottenews.org as attachments in .doc format. All letters, commentaries and obituaries must contain the writer’s full name, town of residence and, for editing purposes only, phone number.
- Letters may not exceed 300 words, obituaries 500 words and commentaries 750 words.
- The opinions expressed in commentaries and letters to the editor belong solely to the author and are not to be understood as endorsed by either the Board of Directors or the editorial staff of the paper.
- All published letters and commentaries will include the writer’s name and town of residence.
- Before publishing any obituary, we will need proper verification of death.
- All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, factual accuracy, tone, length and consistency with our house publishing style.
- Whenever editing is necessary we will make every effort to publish each submission in its entirety and to preserve the original intent and wording. We will confer with writers before publishing any submitted material that in our judgment requires significant editing before it can be published.
- The news editor makes the final determination whether a letter to the editor, a commentary or an obituary will be published as submitted, returned for rewriting or rejected.

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Notice Of Vacancies And Expiring Terms On Town Boards And Of Town Official Positions

April 2021

The following boards and positions currently have unfilled seats:

- Board of Auditors (1 seat; term ending March 1, 2022)
- Cemetery Commission (2 seats; terms ending March 1, 2022)
- Conservation Commission (1 seat; term ending April 30, 2022)
- Energy Committee (1 seat; term ending April 30, 2022)
- Planning Commission (1 seat; term ending April 30, 2022)
- Trustee of Public Funds (2 seats; terms ending March 1, 2022)
- Zoning Board – Alternate Member (1 seat; term ending April 30, 2022)

The following boards and positions have seats with terms ending April 30, 2021:

- Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee (3 seats; 3-year term)
- Conservation Commission (2 seats; 4-year term)
- Constable (1 seat; 2-year term)
- Emergency Management Director (1 seat; 1-year term)
- Energy Committee (3 seats; 2-year term)
- Green-Up Day Coordinator(s) (1 or 2 seats; 1-year term)
- Planning Commission (1 seat; 4-year term)
- Recreation Commission (3 seats; 3-year term)
- Thompson’s Point Design Review Committee (1 seat; 3-year term)
- Trails Committee (5 seats; 2-year term)
- Tree Warden (1 seat; 1-year term)
- Zoning Board (1 seat; 3-year term)

If you have interest in serving the Town by participating in any of these capacities, please send a short statement explaining your interest and relevant background information to Dean Bloch, Town Administrator, at dean@townofcharlotte.com. If you have questions, please e-mail or call 425-3071 ext. 5, or stop by Town Hall.

Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

I have been wondering about the future direction of our paper given recent wrinkles among staff and Board. I think about what makes *The Charlotte News* special and what, over the years, has given it ballast when there are waves. Imagine how helpful it would be if that essence were described so that those who work, contribute, and faithfully volunteer for the paper could align themselves with what the paper is and is not, with its mission, and with its distinct place in our community.

Our trusty *Charlotte News* runs deep and holds fast; it speaks to the heart of the town and binds us together. If people don’t know this, they probably should. Can the ethos of the ‘*News*’ be articulated to capture this? It comes down to a few powerful things: *The Charlotte News* enhances our lives and fosters a sense of community among us. It’s that simple! We are the paper. Some of us put the paper together, others get it to press, our voices appear on its pages, and all of us read it. We sit on the boards, organize the

functions, and celebrate the events about which articles are researched and written. Participation like this engenders a sense of belonging, loyalty and trust in this sturdy paper. One of the remarkable aspects of *The Charlotte News* is the way it walks a fine and intentional line, cultivating stories from our neighbors and town acquaintances along with rigorous, in-depth and balanced reporting of town affairs that affect our daily lives. These parts are integral to the whole; we anticipate them in every issue. They have successfully co-existed over time, neither at the expense of the other and always with an eye on the quality writing for which our paper is known. Good writing after all, is a hallmark of *The Charlotte News*.

I’d like to see us nurture the soul of this gem of a paper and preserve what has made it so enduring, such a part of us. It is a reliable source of fine story telling, prescient and poignant articles and above all, important reading with one’s morning mug of coffee.

Molly McClaskey
Charlotte, VT

ZONING

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hours until 10 p.m.

The bulk of the meeting was spent discussing outside food service and amending the board decision that banned seating, and food consumption on the premises, including in the deli, general store, parking lot or on adjacent property of Spear’s.

The rigidity of the current permit was what compelled Spear and her lawyer to seek an amendment to the language. The language effectively prohibited the consumption of food on the premises under any circumstance, which Murphy described as “brutal.”

Community members at the meeting spoke up in favor of having outdoor seating at Spear’s.

“I think [outdoor dining] is a good thing. I mean, that’s what towns are all about, gathering places and sharing stories and supporting local businesses, and I think we should support this,” said Mike Dunbar, owner of Charlotte Crossings.

The board agreed to discuss the changes during an executive session at the end of the meeting.

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Report from the Legislature

The intractable problem of underfunded pensions



Rep. Mike
Yantachka

The announcement in January by State Treasurer Beth Pearce that the state pension funds for teachers and state employees were grossly underfunded and that action had to be taken to make the plans sustainable

alarmed all Vermonters, but most especially teachers and state employees who are counting on those funds for their retirement. Her recommendations for plan changes included painful changes to pension benefits, including increasing the retirement age, increasing employee contributions, and lowering the payouts. Teachers and state employees reacted immediately to protect the benefits they had earned by contacting legislators to plead their case. This issue quickly became the dominant topic, rivaling and intertwining with the budget in legislative deliberations. As such, it touches all Vermonters and deserves a closer look at the facts and figures.

In the 1990s the Legislature cut back on the appropriations to the pension funds under the assumption that investment returns would continue to exceed the actuarial predictions. Over the years this contributed to about a third of the current \$3 billion unfunded liability in the pension funds for teachers and state employees. Other contributing factors include an aging workforce with the number of active teachers/employees roughly equal to the number of retirees, increased longevity of retirees, and the consistently low returns on investment experienced since the “great recession” of 2009. The revised actuarial estimate this year added another \$600 million to the pension system’s unfunded liabilities in this year alone.

The Legislature does not manage the pensions or dictate the investment strategy, but we are taking the lead to bring stakeholders to the table to come up with a solution. Vermonters need the unions representing employees, the Governor and the Treasurer to come to the table as well. Between 2016 and 2020 the annual contributions from the taxpayer-supported state General Fund to the pension funds increased from \$184M to \$303M, while the teacher/employee contributions increased from \$59M to \$76M. The House Government Operations Committee has been considering not only the recommendations of the Treasurer but also alternative approaches to save the defined benefit model.

The Legislature has already stepped up with a significant increase in funding for pensions this year. The FY22 budget that

was recently passed by the House contains an appropriation of over \$300 million for the pension funds. This represents an increase of roughly \$100 million over the actuarial required contribution last year. While federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) stimulus funds cannot be used or applied to the pension system directly, they can be used to free up General Fund dollars to make a significant pension investment. Another \$150 million in General Fund dollars have been set aside for this purpose, for a total FY22 contribution approaching half a billion dollars.

Late last week Speaker Jill Krowinski announced that the House Government Operations Committee would push forward with much-needed pension governance reforms and create a task force to work over the summer to gather stakeholder input and recommend structural reform to the pension systems. The governance changes are key to solving the pension crisis. These reforms will increase the level of professional expertise of those managing the pension funds and take the politics out of decision-making at the Vermont Pension Investment Committee (VPIC), which consists of employer and employee representatives. They will streamline the decision-making process around changes to actuarial assumptions, require more frequent experience studies, and enhance transparency around investment fees. Both the new governance structure and the pension task force need to maintain representation and participation from key employee and employer stakeholders.

Defined benefit public pension plans, when properly designed and managed, are the most affordable way to provide secure income in retirement. The Legislature is working to ensure the sustainability of the plans in a way that protects not only the benefits that employees and retirees earned but also the Vermonters whose taxes contribute to the pension funds and are increasingly under pressure to shore up the funds each year.

I welcome your emails (myantachka.dfa@gmail.com) or phone calls (802-233-5238). This article and others can be found at my website (MikeYantachka.com).

The
**Charlotte
News**

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Around Town

Congratulations:

to **Ava Rohrbaugh** and **Annika Gruber** of Charlotte, whose poems were selected to appear in the April 2 Young Writers Project sponsored by the *Burlington Free Press*.

Ava’s poem, titled “The Cherry Tree,” won the Silver Maple Award for Writing. In it she says she felt nothing for the tree in her family yard until it fell to her axe. Its bark cracked and its blossoms “smeared over the axe.” Now the tree lies on the ground and “moss supports its head like a newborn baby.” She says goodbye to the cherry tree “again and again and again.”

Annika’s poem is titled “The tree planter,” and she received Honorable Mention for Writing. It features her grandfather’s planting of a red maple tree in the family’s backyard in Montana when he was in fifth grade. Since then he has “been on a journey of planting trees at every house he has ever lived in.” Now Annika looks at her grandfather’s habit of planting as “resilience” and how he “planted each one of them just so he could watch them grow.”

to **Norm Riggs** a North Ferrisburgh based author who has spent a good deal of time in the Charlotte Senior Center, and whose self-published book *Curbing Across America in the Age of Innocence* was reviewed in the March 31 *Seven Days* newspaper. The book is set in the summer of 1964 when Riggs and a college friend embarked on a cross-country trip to earn money. They painted addresses on the curbs of homes and solicited donations for what they called “community improvement work.” Set in the

Vietnam era, America was on the “precipice of enormous political and social change,” and that change becomes apparent in the book.

to **Heritage Landscapes LLC** of Charlotte whose designs won two national awards given out by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The projects are located in Chicago and Oyster Bay, New York. Chicago’s is the “Jackson Bay Habitat and History Integration for Community Asset Renewal.” Oyster Bay’s is the “Planting Fields Cultural Landscape.” The Jackson Park project enhances Chicago’s Southside. The Oyster Bay project looks to foster a deeper engagement of visitorship by enhancing place-based learning. Heritage Landscape also won “Honors Awards” for the “Niagara Falls State Parkway River Way” and the “Yale University Campus Farrand Cultural Landscape Study.”

Sympathy:

is extended to family and friends of **Joseph W. Lane** of Charlotte who died March 18 at the age of 89. He lived his growing-up years on the family’s farm on Church Hill Road in Charlotte. His last 40 years were spent in South Burlington. He owned the Lane Motel, repaired appliances, and worked at IBM until his retirement. Surviving family includes his son Jeffrey and Jeffrey’s wife, Ellen, of Charlotte. The family asks that, in lieu of flowers, those wishing to make donations in his memory consider giving to St. John Vianney Catholic Church, 160 Hinesburg Road, South Burlington, 05403.

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The **Charlotte News**



Opinion

Articles 6 & 7 reboot? No, thanks. Let's get through the damn pandemic first, please

Alex Bunten

Now that the smelly air has cleared from my pews (I live in a church, don't you know...) and my massive nine-bucket sugaring operation has come to a bitter-sweet end, it's probably time to check in with town business again.

I blacked out toward the end but seems Articles 6 and 7 were resoundingly defeated by a 70/30 margin. As many of you know, I wasn't so jazzed on these plans. Why? Well, it was a variety of things (skip this if you remember):

- Going from 5 acres to 1 for residential zoning seemed out of sync with Charlotte and to only apply this to E. Charlotte commercial district felt like spot-zoning to many.
- We had a Planning Commission (PC) leaning very heavily on a 10-year-old series of workshops that they cherry-picked town sentiment on development from.
- The PC said they have been working on this for years, but couldn't explain what the potential build-out was in even a general sense and they didn't seem to expect any opposition, positioning the change as de minimus.
- There was an error in the calculation of the commercial district size that was also passed off as "no big deal" even after the proposed amendments were rubber stamped by a "it's-not-our-job-to-critically-assess-a-Planning-Commission-proposal-that-will-be-put-to-the-voters-as-'approved by the Selectboard'" Selectboard.
- And yes, the real or perceived conflict of interest on the Selectboard was real to many.

I'm probably missing a few, but in sum, it was a bit of a stink show and I'm glad the town rallied to say, "no, thanks."

Alas, it seems the PC wants to crack on and repackage similar changes for a vote next year despite the resounding no vote. The people have spoken, so let's do it the

same but different—bite-sized so these lizard-brained residents can comprehend. Democracy in action.

Please, can we not right now...

Can we just emerge from the damn pandemic before we start talking about esoteric land use policy again? Just because housing stock is low in town doesn't mean the PC has to scramble to welcome the new gold rush. Just because developers want changes to allow them "flexibility" doesn't mean residents want a Shelburne 2.0.

We have functional land use regs, correct? They work just fine and that's all I want until I can see my damn family without wearing a damn mask and my daughter can possibly meet another kid without having to be all weird about it.

I respect those dedicated to this town and its future, but if you want town engagement and cooperation on a year's long project to redevelop the town's villages or large-scale land use reg changes, my spidey sense tells me this isn't a great time to find it.

If we want to start making the E. Village more villagey in the meantime, here's a few places to start:

- **Lower the speed limit.** Off the top of my head, I can't think of any Vermont village that calls itself a village with a 45 mph speed limit. Richmond – 30. Shelburne – 30. Vergennes – 25. Carrie Spear told me for years you can't enforce anything lower, but don't know I buy that. If anyone agrees and would like to help push this forward, please get in touch.
- **Fix up Spear's Store.** If that means new ownership and a deli, great. Maybe they could move those dang concrete blocks. What are they for, anyway? Looks like a war zone. Maybe they can tear down that creepy, Japanese Knot Weed infested building behind it while they're at it.
- **Fix up the old Sheehan House.** Or sell it. Tear it down if it's as bad as it looks. Whatever Mr. Hinsdale thinks would be prudent for his prized historic property. He doesn't live in Charlotte anymore—glad as hell he left, he's said—so I won't go to lengths to disclose his address, but if he's the power broker he imagines himself to

be, he could start by taking care of what he's got in E. Charlotte before planning the rest.

So, let's put a pin in the land use reg meddling until next spring, eh? If everyone's family is all right and our kids have a taste of normal again, I think we'd all happily engage on a variety of issues that make our town special and what we need to do to keep it that way.

Until then, I'm reminded of Jeff Goldblum in *Jurassic Park* thinking about planners "being so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

Articles 6,7,8 and 9: Looking back and looking ahead

Peter Joslin

Now that the dust has settled, the yard signs are gone, and Charlotters have exercised their democratic right and responsibility, it's an appropriate time to take a step back and take stock of the process and results of Articles 6,7,8 and 9 on Town Meeting Day. Articles 6 and 7 proposed to expand the East Charlotte Village Commercial District and reduce the density requirement to foster growth. These articles raised important questions about growth and development in Charlotte.

How much growth, if any? Commercial and/or residential? Should the village and/or commercial boundaries be expanded? Should density requirements change? Should the East Village and West Village be treated the same way? What about the cost of housing in Charlotte—does it matter? Are the goals regarding development outlined in the Town Plan still relevant today?

From my perspective—beyond my disappointment that articles 6 and 7 were voted down—bringing these important questions to the fore is the silver lining to what transpired. What's before us now is whether these issues will go the way of winter or spark on-going, sustained public interest and involvement in answering these questions that are critical to the future of our town. This, in my opinion, is the most important take-away.

In 2018, the Planning Commission began working on extensive changes to the Land Use Regulations. The PC began this process by reviewing over 75 identified potential changes that were then prioritized, edited down to 22 proposed amendments, and finally formalized into three separate "buckets": The East Charlotte Village Commercial District (Since it included a change to the boundary, which is part of the Town Plan, it required a separate hearing, hence, Articles 6 and 7.); Act 143 Accessory Farm Businesses (Article 8), and lastly, Technical Updates, Corrections and Policy Changes (Article 9).

In hindsight, this may have been too much to ask voters to consider at one time. For the overwhelming majority of Charlotters, the Town Plan and Land Use Regulations are not part of their regular vocabulary nor on their radar. This is not criticism, merely statement of fact. I offer myself as an example: prior to my time on the PC, I had very little understanding of the Town Plan and LURs. It wasn't until 2004, when I was appointed to the PC, that my education of these important documents began.

Whereas the Town Plan looks at Charlotte at the 40,000-foot level and is broad and aspirational, the Land Use Regulations are on the ground, in the weeds, and complex in the minute detail. Due to this and how the process played out, it's clear the PC will need to approach proposed amendments differently in the future: specific enough in content yet made clearer for the general public. The PC made two calculation errors regarding increased acreage and the potential "build-out" number of units. This caused some understandable confusion. Comments posted on Front Porch Forum and during public comment at meetings often centered on needing a defined build-out, asking the PC to illustrate what the village would look like.

This is not feasible since the land is privately held, and there is no town wastewater or water infrastructure in the East Village. Proposed development is at the discretion of land owners and developers, as it is and has been in every other area of Charlotte, excluding

Opinion

OPINION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

town-owned land in the West Village and Thompson’s Point. Development is contingent on many factors—first and foremost, availability of wastewater and water, and how much. These are practical constraints. Once identified, subdivision permits go through rigorous review by the Planning Commission and/or Zoning Board, depending on the type of application.

At the outset of this process three years ago, public participation was very modest and continued to be as the PC worked its way through the 22 amendments. The Planning Commission spent a great deal of time on the East Charlotte Village changes and Act 143, Accessory Farm Business. Participation during the PC’s required two public hearings was low. Public participation increased when the amendments came before the Selectboard. I see two important take-aways regarding the amendment process and public participation: the PC needs to improve outreach to encourage public participation, and the public needs to play a more active and sustained role earlier in the process of discussion of our town’s future. It is a two-way street.

Looking ahead there are a few facts to consider. The average price of a home

in Charlotte is over \$600,000. Since at least 2004, the overwhelming majority of development has been, and continues to be, in the rural district. The year my family moved to Charlotte, in 1993, student enrollment at CCS was 488. For the school year 2020-2021 it is 360. The 2010 U.S. census projected the population in Charlotte to be 3,861 by 2015; the current population is 3,754. Coupled with this is the fact that we are an aging demographic. The median age in 2010 was 44.8, in 2020, 47.3, and is projected to increase to 48.1 in 2025, higher than the state or Chittenden County. What do these numbers portend for the future without modifications to provide opportunity for young people of modest financial means to become part of the town fabric? And what does it mean for aging citizens who may want to downsize but still live in Charlotte?

In an effort to keep the interest and dialogue going, and build on what was learned, the Planning Commission will continue to review potential amendments to the Land Use Regulations. The intent is to foster greater participation and broaden the scope of the discussion regarding the future of our town.

Peter Joslin is Chair of Charlotte Planning Commission. This is his opinion and is not written on behalf of the Planning Commission.

Town

Subtle signs of spring



Crocus flower.

Photo by Lee Krohn



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Education

Choosing high school classes with an eye toward college



Margo Bartsch
CONTRIBUTOR

As high school students start to choose next fall's classes, the upperclassmen will soon be referred to as rising juniors or seniors. That new title makes college appear closer to reality. With so many courses to consider, how can a student evaluate the various paths to be prepared for college? The classes with the letters AP (Advanced Placement) in front of the name are designed with the goal of tackling college-level material while in high school. In addition, the Vermont Agency of Education encourages dual-enrollment courses at specific Vermont colleges for students to take challenging classes that may not be offered at their high school.

Beginning with AP courses, there are two components to consider. First, the student will do rigorous homework and take tests toward earning a grade in the class. Also, at the start of May, the AP exams are given; these are standardized tests that are administered with scores reported in July. The AP exam is scored from one to five, with the optimal score of five. This is in addition to a student's grade in the actual course. In some cases, the classroom grade could differ from the standardized test score. With all the preparation of taking an AP course and the pressure of an exam, is it worth it? Since all colleges have different

admissions criteria and student profiles, there is not a one-size-fits-all answer. The goal for an AP course is to provide some standardization of college-level material for the student to be prepared for college.

Not all colleges consider AP courses as equivalent to an actual college class. For example, three local colleges do not evaluate AP credits equally. Dartmouth College does not count AP courses toward credits required for graduation. The University of Vermont does grant credit toward graduation in some subjects, depending on the scores. Middlebury College does not allow AP credits to bypass taking requirements for specific majors or minors. Thus, students will need to review each college's handbook from the Registrar's office as to whether and how AP courses can be used.

Another college-ready option is the Vermont Dual-Enrollment Program through the Agency of Education. This allows most Vermont students to take up to two college courses from various participating Vermont colleges, offered these on campus, online, or at the participating high school. Many high schools list dual-enrollment courses on the student's transcript. Also, the student will have an actual college transcript with their grade and credits. When applying to colleges, a student can submit their dual-enrollment transcript as proof of their college-level performance. Since not all colleges accept credits from other colleges,



Photo by Felix Mittermeier from Pixabay

it is important to check with each college's Registrar's office as to their policies of accepting college credits.

AP courses and Dual-Enrollment classes can seem daunting, but they can expose the student to future academic interests. For example, if a student is interested in how climate change impacts migration, taking AP Human Geography is an eye-opening course. Colleges refer to this as interdisciplinary education—how various academic subjects like science and economics are interconnected. In taking college dual-enrollment classes, the student can request a teacher reference to highlight their work ethic and academic capabilities beyond the typical high school learning dynamic.

College applications usually ask the student to list their intended major. The colleges review the student's transcripts to see the academic fit. For example, if a student plans to apply to the Business School, taking AP Macroeconomics (EC-011 at UVM dual-enrollment) and AP Microeconomics (EC-012 at UVM dual-enrollment) will give the student a running start with these typical

distribution requirements. Even if a student does not receive future college credit, the knowledge gained is a solid foundation to build upon. Adjusting to college is a big change with independent living and learning, where having academic familiarity freshman year can help to build confidence and performance.

Planning your high school courses is an ongoing discussion in weighing various alternatives. High school AP classes are expanding and college dual-enrollment courses are becoming more common. The college admissions process evaluates this coursework as another measurement beyond typical SAT and ACT test scores, especially since many colleges are remaining test-optional. Although it may be difficult to do something new for the first time, the lessons we learn can help pave the way for success in college and beyond.

Margo Bartsch founded College Essay Coach, a full-service college admission business, and has been an adjunct professor in business at Champlain College and at Middlebury College.

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Adding up the numbers outdoors



Charlotte Central School 8th grade outside math class last week - when it really did feel like spring.
Photo contributed

Town

Gear up for Green Up Day 2021

Kim Findlay
CHARLOTTE GREEN UP DAY CO-COORDINATOR

Did you know that Vermont was the first state to designate a day of the year to clean up litter along the roadsides? And on that day in 1970, 51 years ago (!), participation and results far exceeded expectations: 95% of the 2,400 miles of the interstate and state roads and 75% of the 8,300 miles of town roads were cleared of garbage! Thanks to Governor Deane C. Davis and Senator George Aiken, we have a wonderful tradition which inspires Vermonters to get out and de-trash this beautiful state.

In our town, Green Up Day has had a robust turnout every year with tons (yes, tons!) of litter removed from our roadsides. This year Green Up Day is Saturday, May 1. We will be at the west parking lot at Charlotte Central School from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. To round out the weekend, there is e-waste recycling at the event and a group clean-up of the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge. This year, Ken Spencer is donating one of his Planet Packs®, a litter pick-up backpack, for a free raffle. Simply stop by during the day and fill in a raffle ticket.

Due to the pandemic, the school district requires that we practice safety measures as suggested by the state. Wear masks and keep a safe distance from others while at the event.

Things you should know:

Sign up for a route (3 ways): 1) on our website CharlotteVTGreenUpDay.com, 2) email Kim at farafieldfarm@gmail.com, or 3) at the event on Saturday. **Signing up for a route makes our efforts more efficient by making sure everyone gets a road that hasn't been cleaned up yet.**

Get bags: This year we will be giving out green bags for trash and *optional* clear bags for redeemable and recyclable plastic containers. Bags can be picked up at the event on Saturday. You can carry just a green bag and put everything in there, or you can carry both bags and separate trash from recyclable items. **Please do not leave filled bags on the roadside—they must be returned to the event site.**

Volunteer: Volunteers are needed! My co-coordinator Ken Spencer and I would



love to have helpers at the CCS parking lot! Two-hour (or more) shifts available.

Visit our website: It has all the information you need...and lots more! Visit CharlotteVTGreenUpDay.com or contact me at farafieldfarm@gmail.com with any questions, to help out, or sign up for a route.

I don't know about you, but it warms my heart to see folks out cleaning up our town together. It says so much about how we care for this land and shows how important it is in so many ways to keep trash from piling up.

Whether driving, biking or walking around town, isn't it great to not see that junk on the side of the road? And to share a collective feeling of stewardship? Thank you for helping out on this very special day!

Business Feature

Wayne's Tires keeps you on the move

Robert Bloch
CONTRIBUTOR

Take a ride down Mt. Philo Road, past the park entrance and the Mt. Philo Inn, up over the ridge, savoring the spectacular views in all directions, and down into the borderlands toward North Ferrisburgh. Just past the red "Entering North Ferrisburgh" sign you will find Wayne's Tires, and its owner Wayne Abare. Wayne's a big guy, especially standing there in his black Carhart overalls and baseball cap, flashing a friendly grin.

Wayne grew up in North Ferrisburgh and has lived at the same Mt. Philo Road address all his life. His dad built the garage and operated an autobody shop there for twenty-three years. Wayne started his tire dealership in 2006 in the same building on Mt. Philo Road, following a successful 20 year career with Riley's Tires, in South Burlington. At Riley's, Wayne gained experience in all aspects of the business, including some time making "house calls" (road calls?) to help 18 wheelers and other heavy equipment in tire distress. Wayne started the business part time and credits Harvey Sharrow (remember Harv's Tires) with providing him important help during those early days.

Today, Wayne enjoys solid backing from the community and has become the "go to" place for all things concerning automobile tires for many Charlotte and Ferrisburgh residents. As you might expect, early Spring and late Fall are Wayne's busiest periods.

He notes the changes that he has seen in the tire business over the years, including the move to larger and larger automobile tires. When he started working with tires, something as large as a 16" rim would be found mostly on pick-up trucks. Today, they are among the smaller tires on compact cars and 19-20" rims are commonplace on many



Wayne Abare of Wayne's Tires.

Photo by Robert Bloch

family autos. Tires are lasting longer too, due to improved rubber compounds and tread design.

Wayne's a hard-working guy, but during the slower periods, or with any free time for that matter, Wayne is likely to be found on the lake fishing or in winter riding his snowmobile in the Northeast Kingdom. Salmon is his favorite gamefish and the walls of the shop display a few photos of some of his more (and winning) memorable battles.

When asked how he competes with the big tire retailers Wayne says that his prices are competitive, but more importantly Wayne says, "Wayne's Tire is the only place where you can expect the owner of the company to be mounting and balancing your tires when you come in".

That works for me.



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Health Matters

COVID—Are we there yet?



Jim Hyde
CONTRIBUTOR

Are we there yet? Has there ever been a road trip when that question wasn't asked? Well, Dr. Anthony Fauci believes "we are at the corner. Whether or not we are going to be turning the corner remains to be seen." The Director of

the CDC, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, went a step further saying, "Right now I'm scared." I have a sense of "impending doom." These words are in stark contrast to the growing pressures on policymakers to open things up and put this COVID thing behind us.

Vermont has seemingly avoided the worst effects that have plagued other states with similar demographics. We are the beneficiaries of an accident of geography, a culture of shared purpose, and solid public health and political leadership. But ominous warning signs are everywhere.

Infection rates first plateaued and now are rising rapidly again, especially among young adults 20–40 years old. Testing rates are also declining, suggesting that people's vigilance and sense of urgency is waning. Most ominously, new variants of coronavirus are now circulating in Vermont as elsewhere. While an estimated 45% of Vermont's population may have some degree of immunity to the original virus, either through natural infection or vaccination, more than half of our population is still at risk. This provides rich opportunities for new variants to proliferate.

There are currently at least 5 variants in wide circulation in the U.S., three of them already in Vermont. These are of special interest either because they are more easily transmitted or because they appear to lead to more serious illness. In short, both here in Vermont and globally we are in a race against time. While we know that mask wearing, distancing, and hand and face hygiene can reduce infection rates, these behaviors do not confer immunity.

It's the miracle of our time that in a single year we have been able to sequence the coronavirus, develop, test, and

"The goal is to vaccinate every eligible Charlotte resident by July 4."

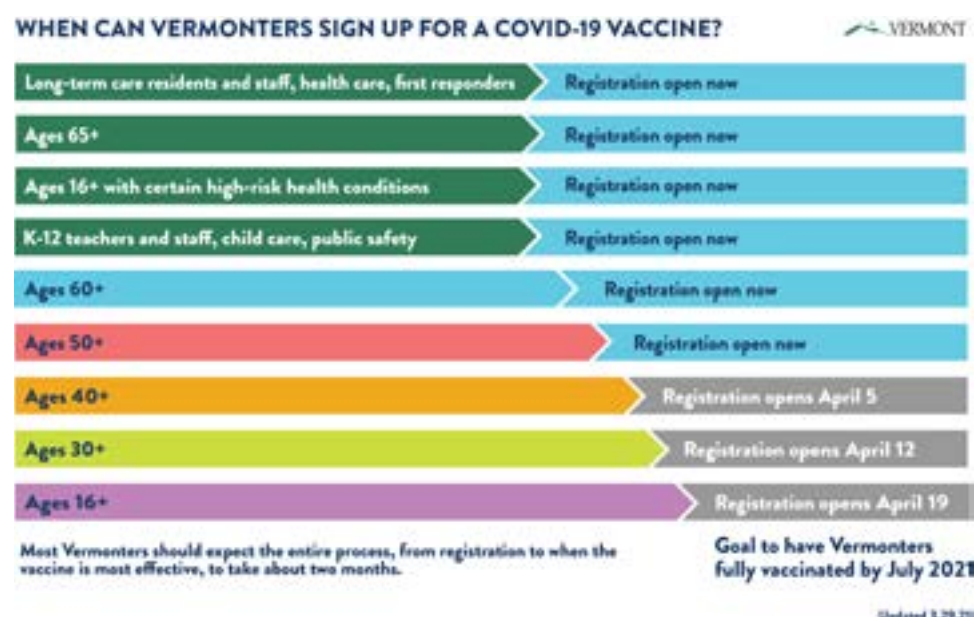
manufacture several vaccines, all of which have proven effective at preventing infection, reducing serious disease, and preventing premature death. But it's vaccinations not vaccines that will get us through this pandemic. Behavior change will buy us some time, but ultimately, it's an effective vaccination program that will deliver us.

Unlike so many other global threats that we face, for example global warming or population growth, there are things we as individuals can do now about COVID that will have an immediate and measurable impact on our lives. We can continue to practice mitigation efforts and make sure that everyone who is medically and otherwise eligible is vaccinated.

This is why the Charlotte Community Partnership (CCP) is organizing: VaxHelp Charlotte. The goal is to vaccinate every eligible Charlotte resident by July 4.

The CCP was organized in April 2020 in response to the Covid pandemic. The purpose was to assess what was working, what was needed, and how best to support one another during the pandemic. Initial participants included: the Library, Senior Center, Grange, Charlotte Congregational Church, Mt. Carmel Catholic Church, Fire and Rescue, and the Food Shelf. A result of the partnership is the ongoing community resilience assessment (see Trina Bianchi's column). The VaxHelp campaign is a direct outgrowth of the resilience project.

While roughly 40 percent of us have already received at least one dose of an approved vaccine, there are still many who have not. Age eligibility, used in the early roll out phase, will no longer be a factor as of April 19 when all Vermont residents over



16 years old will be eligible. (So far the FDA has not approved any vaccine for use by those under 16 years of age.) Cost is not a factor as all of the vaccines are free. It is also not necessary to have health insurance.

This still leaves barriers for some which VaxHelp Charlotte plans to address:

1. Lack of internet or a computer access. The Charlotte Public Library will provide an accessible laptop on their porch so people can use the Vermont Department of Health's online portal. If you are unfamiliar with the internet or have difficulty using a computer, a VaxHelp volunteer can help you navigate the scheduling site.

2. Difficulty hearing or understanding phone encounters. Among the choices that Vermonters have for scheduling a vaccine appointment is a phone access portal. Many people have difficulty navigating phone trees and understanding responses on the phone. VaxHelp Charlotte can put you in touch with a local volunteer who will help you with phone access.

3. Questions about the vaccines. There is a tremendous amount of valuable information available on the COVID vaccines on the Vermont Department of Health website. Sometimes it can appear overwhelming. VaxHelp Charlotte can put you in touch with a local volunteer who can help you with questions you may have but for which you have been unable to find

answers. Importantly, however, volunteers cannot provide you with medical advice—only your health care provider can do that.

4. Transportation and logistics. Once an appointment is made, some people may need help with driving or obtaining transportation. VaxHelp Charlotte can help you find a local neighbor volunteer willing to provide you with transportation to and from your appointment.

You can access any of these services at VaxHelp05445@gmail.com or by phone at (802)425-3864 (The Charlotte Library). Someone from VaxHelp Charlotte will then be in touch with you.

All indications are that there will be plenty of vaccine available to meet all of Vermonters' demands. The goal of VaxHelp Charlotte is to make sure that no barriers get in the way of delivery of these vaccines to every eligible Charlotter. If you want to help in this effort, talk to family members, friends and neighbors. Ask if they need or would like help signing up for a vaccine appointment.

Are we there yet? No. Not until we are all vaccinated. It starts locally, but ultimately must be a global effort. While we're heading there, don't forget to wear a mask, distance and practice those good hygiene behaviors. Whatever you do: *Don't miss your shot, Charlotte!*

Town

Representative Mike Yantachka, a healthy Vermonter



Dr. Elizabeth Hunt

I had the opportunity to chat with Mike Yantachka, our state representative, recently and learn a bit more about him and his experiences as they relate to health and

our community. Mike is serving District Chittenden 4-1 and sits in Seat #81 in the Vermont House.

Living well

Rep. Yantachka saves energy by driving a plug-in hybrid vehicle as well as utilizing his solar tracker to power heat pumps in his home. A solar hot water system also helps him save energy. Around his home in Charlotte he also likes to walk, hike and ski. His dog gets some nice exercise, and his wife keeps the “honey-do” list coming so no one feels idle.

During times of COVID, he has hiked Snake Mountain, Mt. Philo and the Wake Robin trails. He remained busy during the stay home, stay safe times by campaigning remotely by calling constituents instead of knocking on doors and by keeping in touch with family.

COVID-19 then and now

“It was a major disruption; we were gaveled out of session with no idea how to handle the rest of the year,” meaning the remaining legislative session of 2020. The House passed a rule change to be able to work remotely, and 75 elected officials travelled to Montpelier to vote in person and pass legislation, allowing our state government to function remotely. This led to the longest legislative session in Vermont history. Yantachka recalls, “We got money for people to get food, pay their rent, benefit from the CARES Act.” He has seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how important health care is and reminded us “how much we need one another and are responsible for each other.”

The Charlotte and Hinesburg communities

Rep. Yantachka feels lucky to live in a community that prioritizes preventing climate change and preserving natural resources, subjects that he works toward every working day. He misses when “people would come to the state house, students and older people” and there was more connecting with community. We agree that those times will return for Vermont, it’s just unclear when.

The 2021 session

The House has been busy getting through the mid-term of the session; now they are in “crossover” when bills start moving between the House and the Senate.

Yantachka is especially supportive of funding a modernization of the outdated software system used for unemployment insurance. With his computer science background, he helps develop policy relating to technology, including telecommunications and the state’s IT systems. He helped pass legislation in 2020 to “put devices in the hands of people who needed to be able to connect, needed tele-medicine at that time.”

Earlier this month the federal government awarded roughly 2.7 billion dollars to Vermont for Coronavirus-related aid, a “once in a lifetime opportunity” as noted by Secretary of Administration Susanne Young. Yantachka is looking forward to reducing fossil fuel dependence, focusing on greenhouse gas emissions, and continuing his core work as a lawmaker on environmental and energy issues in our state.

Challenges that lie ahead

Yantachka recounts what many Vermonters have read in the papers, that “there are huge issues with state pensions.” The Legislature is in the process of determining what can be done to keep the pension system healthy without hurting the teachers or state employees.



Rep, Mike Yantachka

The current vaccination plan for all eligible Vermonters is a good start, but he reports that we could benefit from better access to health care. Particularly immigrant communities, Vermonters who identify within the BIPOC community, and English language learners need more outreach.

A healthy future

Yantachka took part in passing education bills that will bolster literacy for pre-K through third grade students, pilot embedded dental and health care in school settings, and build upon existing school construction.

The “broadband bill,” H 360, passed the House and has moved into the Senate. This bill would amplify access to broadband for uses like tele-health, communication with loved ones, and mental health support.

So many bills to cover, but at the end of a long day when dinner becomes an afterthought of the lawmakers, Yantachka notes, “It’s like a family. Unlike in Washington, D.C., we all get along pretty well.” He misses the in-person interaction with colleagues and cooperative, respectful government as COVID has forced much of the House activity to be remote for now. But he is dedicated to getting the work done for Vermonters and we are all benefiting.

Hi, Neighbor!

Rick Vincent: A steady hand at UVM Medical Center



Phyl Newbeck
CONTRIBUTOR

When Rick Vincent was hired as an accountant by what was then known as the University Health Center, he wasn't thinking much about the future. "I was a very young person at the time," he said. "I didn't know if I was

going to stay in finance or even in the Burlington area." Vincent did decide to stick around, and six years ago he was promoted to Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for the University of Vermont Medical Center.

Vincent is pleased to have spent his career at the medical center. "It became much more apparent when I had my own children," he said. "I realized how fortunate we are to have an academic medical center that sits in a rural part of the country. The fact that we have this in our backyard and can receive all these types of services without having to travel out of state made it apparent just how special this place is."

When University Health Center merged with the Medical Center of Vermont and Fanny Allen to become Fletcher Allen, Vincent worked in accounting for the newly created organization. From there, he became a financial analyst before switching paths for a role in operations. In that capacity he worked as the director of a number of departments including pathology, anesthesiology and the cancer center. Eight years ago, he switched back and became Vice President for Finance before being promoted to his current position.

Vincent acknowledges that the pandemic has made for a difficult year at the medical center. "Early on," he said "before we had a real sense of what might be coming



From left to right, Ben, Rick, Taylor, Danielle, Sydney.

Photo contributed.

our way in terms of support from the feds and state, it was quite scary." The hospital shut down elective services, restricted in-patient access, and tried to transition to tele-medicine as much possible to keep patients safe. "Volume dropped dramatically," he said "and we had to make some tough decisions to keep the organization afloat. It was a bad year, but it could have been much worse."

Several years ago, Vincent joined the board of the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce. Referring to himself and others in UVM Medical Center leadership roles, Vincent noted that "we do all we can to be connected to the community so we look for organizations where we can do our part to provide our expertise." Since

the Chamber is a business-oriented group, Vincent felt that his financial background might be helpful. "For what I do in my role, that obviously had an alignment," he said. "I found the Chamber intriguing and wanted to learn more about what they do."

Vincent has lived in Charlotte since 1999, choosing the community because he was looking for a small town with similarities to his childhood home in the Northeast Kingdom. "The Charlotte Central School was also a huge draw," he said "because it reminded us of the small school we went to growing up." Vincent has never looked back on his decision to build a home in Charlotte. "We love and enjoy living here," he said. "It's a beautiful little corner of Vermont and a wonderful place to raise our children. We've been extremely happy to live in this community."

UVM Medical Center may have changed names, but Vincent is happy to have continued his career there. "It goes back to having an unbelievable appreciation for what this organization means to even just my family," he said. "So many people have walked through the doors. My three kids were born here, my wife was treated for an illness and my parents and grandparents have been patients. The fact that I can do my part to keep it vibrant is very rewarding. It's satisfying to know that I am playing my part in protecting and preserving this organization."

"We love and enjoy living here. It's a beautiful little corner of Vermont and a wonderful place to raise our children. We've been extremely happy to live in this community."

Vincent is optimistic by nature and believes life in Vermont will improve rapidly. "We're doing a great job of getting people vaccinated," he said. "We've been really good in Vermont about keeping community prevalence low." Vincent noted that Governor Scott and his team have been using July 1 as a key date for when things will be looking better. "I think things will start to get better fairly rapidly between now and July," Vincent said. "Hopefully we can have a much more enjoyable summer and our kids can go back to school next fall. I'm very hopeful that things will be getting back to normal."



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The **Charlotte News**

Technology

Melissa Mendelsohn: Keeping your computers running

John Hammer
CONTRIBUTOR

“Help, my computer’s not working” is a cry often heard as we’re all confined to our homes by Covid restrictions. “Who can I call to get it running again soon?” The name that pops up most often is Melissa Mendelsohn.

These days, as home computers have taken on a much larger role in our daily lives, we’re depending on Zoom, remote learning, more emailing and ever more complex but convenient applications. The challenges of computers come almost weekly. Melissa is a New York ex-pat who moved to Charlotte 15 years ago to escape the hurly-burly life of suburbia. Facing a new life in a new town, she applied her highly analytical mind to addressing what she saw as a pressing need for home computer repair and maintenance. To her, the challenges of computer operations gave her the kind of stimulation that she craves, that of connecting things and solving problems.

So, with only nine months of understudy with All Systems Repair in Winooski, Melissa branched out on her own. She started out initially repairing Windows machines, but she spent nights learning Apple systems on her own and soon was specializing there too. From her charming small cottage behind a cedar picket fence, she attacks the myriad challenges that are brought to her from all over Vermont. In these days of limited face-to-face interaction, she is able to work directly on a problem machine by remotely connecting without leaving home.

Most often she is called to see why a computer or application isn’t opening or is running too slowly. She quickly begins by checking on whether the computer operating system is up to date. Then she moves on to determining if it needs tuning and that the desirable applications are running properly. For this, she might run a quick and free cleaner program and she’ll recommend some alternatives. She is quick to suggest a free application but will normally offer the advice that you subscribe to the premium service. While the freeware often does the job adequately, the move up to premium will perform much of the manual and time-consuming work for you.

Many of the questions she receives are related to software and applications that have already been installed. Melissa will say that “people are always going to need help ... and if I don’t know the program, I just learn it so I can help them. It benefits both of us.” In these cases, she is openly honest and even thanks the client for giving her the opportunity to learn. If the

problem is beyond her scope, she is quick to recommend other services.

Melissa treats every computer like an individual. She says, “Every computer has its own character, its own idiosyncrasies.” Each has its quirks and pitfalls, and she admits that she never knows what’s going to happen when she gets a call. Often an issue arises from a lack of proper maintenance. Failure to carry out updates as they are issued will frequently lead to problems. Updates not only address software issues but, more importantly, they clean the operating system of security holes as soon these can be corrected. That important check is one of the first things she will look at.

Another threat to good operations are useless applications running in the background, leading to inadequate storage space. Very often old, very large or junk/temporary files and folders sit unnoticed, eating up valuable space. These slow things down, so she will suggest an application to clean out useless files that eat up space. She’ll also recommends malware screening programs. While these programs are of great importance, she is quick to warn you not to have more than one. As she says, “They will just fight each other.” Just pick a good one and sign up for the premium edition. She will give a lot of choices and some recommendations.



Melissa Mendelsohn

As for overall security and privacy issues, she recommends that you don’t use simple passwords and change them often. Never open a URL from a site that is unfamiliar to you or has the word AD next to the URL and beware of any site that asks you for personal information, even if it’s only a telephone number.

While Melissa doesn’t use social media all that much, she has been very happily working on her family genealogy. Ask her about it and she gets excited in what she has found using various means to track down her family. A key application for her is *Google Translate* that allows her to make queries to people in locations in Eastern Europe where her family came from in the early 20th century. She’s been at it for 10 years and follows up with all her finds, translating them into visits and trips to find her past relatives.

She is quick to say that there are no dumb questions concerning computers. “People just don’t know. I’m here to teach them.” That’s what turns her on, and she plans to carry on with that for as long as she can. Heaven knows we all need her. If ever you need her help, she can be found at Orchard Road Computers on your favorite search engine. Her favorite search engine is DuckDuckGo.com, which she will say is more secure.

Out Takes

It’s spring—bring out the bats, balls and gloves

Edd Merritt
CONTRIBUTOR

Take me out to the ball game
Take me out with the crowd
Buy me some peanuts and crackerjacks
I don’t care if I never get back
Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Spring is coming. For me that means the start of baseball season. It’s a game that goes back to my own youth, and it carried on over the years in Little League form through my sons.

In Minnesota baseball season was introduced in a variety of ways. A bunch of towns in the southeastern part of the state each had teams. Our major rival was Austin—the “Packers,” named such because that’s where Hormel Foods was headquartered. Our homecoming float my senior year in high school told those of us on the football team to “Clam the Spam,” and it drove down Broadway showing a clam capturing a can of Spam. That year we did “clam” them and took home the “Big Nine League” trophy.

Meanwhile, though, let me move ahead 25 years to the point in my life where I decided to put my baseball knowledge to work with Charlotte Little League.

My younger son, Ian, decided the pitcher’s mound was his place on the field where he could contribute most to the team.

He did that much of the time. However, like many 10-year-olds, he periodically could not find the plate with the ball.

That, however, was an easy fix. One turned from pitcher into dancer, your feet prancing on the mound and brushing dirt off the rubber. If dancing did not help, eyes Heavenward, praying for strikes might do the trick.

The Charlotte home diamond in those days rested up the hill from the town beach in West Charlotte. It was considerably less sophisticated than today’s field, including places to sit. There, they were called car seats. These were bleachers.

The Tuttle house front yard captured many foul balls and awaited an apologizing parent to cross the street and pick them from Tuttle dog territory. Apparently, “Little League leather” was a tasty item.

Jim Manchester kept the infield in good shape by dragging rusted bed springs (sans mattress) behind his tractor between innings.

Right field sloped to the lake, so that balls hit over the right fielder’s head were likely to end on the beach—maybe even in the water if it happened to be rainy season.

Since the majority of Little Leaguers hit right-handed and most of the balls carried into left field, as coaches we tended to



Photo by Timo Volz from Pexels

put our least skilled outfielders in right field where they often learned more about the dandelions under their feet than the proclivities of the opposing batters. Fortunately, one of my fellow coaches was also our right fielder’s father, and he did not fail to remind his son that he was on a baseball team, in a game that took place in Vermont. Keep his eyes toward home plate. The Adirondacks will remain to his west. If anything distant, think Camel’s Hump.

Well, these are just a few examples of how sports play off elements of human nature that have very little—if nothing at all—to do with game itself.

Why focus on a mound dance instead of your grip on a Louisville Slugger? On the hockey rink, a missed goal can often be corrected by a “blue line boogie.”

Speaking of “mound dances,” you may be interested in watching the Red Sox bring in their closing relief pitcher Craig Kimbrel some night. He has a habit of looking like a “robo-copter” as he gets the sign from his catcher. Kimbrel sticks both arms out from his shoulders and drops them down at the elbows, then glares menacingly at his teammate’s fingers behind home plate.

It’s as much mind as matter from what I can see.

So, when all is said and done, just take me back to those “Glory Days.”

Clipping on my chest protector and buckling my shin guards before crouching behind home plate, I was ready to scan what I considered to be my diamond and outfield. The latter often proved dangerous to its human inhabitants, as the turf became a slippery landing ground for dead fish flies coming in from the Mississippi River.

And so we play our games out of mind as well as out of our bodies, discovering, after all is said, done and maneuvered, it’s time to “put me in coach, I’m ready to play.”

Know someone interesting in Charlotte?
We want to interview them and share their story.

Email news@thecharlottenews.org

The Charlotte News

Sports

Cochrans, Smugglers Notch and Redhawk skiers fit together nicely

Edd Merritt
CONTRIBUTOR

Mid March saw the CVU High School Alpine skiers capture two state championships. Two days of giant slalom races (the first at Cochrans, the second at Smugglers Notch) proved to be the tipping points for both men's and women's

teams. For the men it was the first ever Alpine championship. For the women, it was the first in nearly 20 years.

Redhawk males topped runners-up St. Johnsbury Academy, Mount Mansfield Union and defending champion South Burlington in that order. Cochran's course gave CVU

women an opening day lead, while the men produced only one racer among the top ten (Seth Boffa in ninth).

Redhawk individuals in the two-run combined slalom races were Sean Gilliam, second, Peter Gilliam, fifth, and Ari Diamond, seventh, on the men's ledger; Dicey Manning finished fourth in slalom and fifth in giant slalom among women. Olivia Zubarik was runner-up in slalom.

Redhawk basketball ends its season at the hands of Rice

Rice Memorial High School proved that they deserved the number one seed going into the state finals. They traveled there through a semi-final 72-38 win over CVU. The Hawks

led early on in the game, but Rice soon caught up, switching its defense to a tough 2/3 zone, making the score 40-19 in favor of the Green Knights at halftime.

Deng Dau, Devin Rodgers and Oliver Pudvar led the Redhawk offense while coach Mike Osborne was able to break with his tradition of bringing all team members into on-court action. Instead he rewarded the five seniors for their dedication by letting them play an early stretch of the game as teammates. Those Redhawk seniors were Zach Doane, Henry Bijar, Deng Dau, Ethan Czarny and Devin Rodgers.

Coaches select hockey all-stars

The following selections to state all-star

rosters for men's and women's hockey teams is based on nominations from individual coaches.

Women's hockey

CVU/MMU players: Karina Bushweller—defense, Riley Erdman—forward, and Tess Everett—forward.

CVU academic all-stars (need a cumulative 3.5 GPA): Alicia and Katherine Veronneau.

Division I men's hockey

First team: Redhawk goalie Jack Averill

Third team: CVU forward Cam Saia

Contributors include Chris and Nan Boffa and Tom Giroux.

Pickleball: Who couldn't use a little more fun in their lives?

Katherine Arthaud
CONTRIBUTOR

I first heard the word "pickleball" years ago via my son Tristan, who came home from CVU one day raving about this game he had played in gym class. He gave a blow-by-blow description of a series of heated battles in which he had

efficiently thrashed all opponents unfortunate enough to have ended up on the other side of the net from him. He demonstrated his killer overhead smash in our kitchen. The dogs cowered and ran for cover. I had never seen him so enthusiastic about school.

But then, like many things in a high-schooler's life (maybe in all of our lives), pickleball vanished from his lexicon as quickly as it had emerged. I didn't give it another thought until fairly recently, when suddenly it has become a hard thing to ignore. Initially, my sense was that pickleball was a game for people who for some reason (often bad knees) had had to give up or cut back on tennis. I wasn't super eager to try it. I play a lot of tennis and paddle tennis and my dance card felt too full for yet another racquet sport. But I kept hearing about how fun it was. Eventually, a friend invited me to try it, and feeling a bit like Sam I Am in *Green Eggs and Ham*, I showed up and gave it a whirl.

The first thing I noticed was that the scoring seemed unnecessarily mind boggling. But my friend was a patient and capable teacher, and it wasn't long before I was tentatively calling out the score on my own and generally getting the knack of the game. Before I knew it, I was having a blast. And I was hooked.

Pickleball is a little bit like tennis, a little bit like paddle tennis, a little bit like table tennis, with scorekeeping that is a little bit

like volleyball. (Does that clarify things?) It is typically played by four players (though you can play singles with two) who hit a ball (closely resembling a wiffleball) back and forth over a net. It can be played indoors or outdoors by people of all ages and a wide range of skill levels.

There are many different kinds of sports in this world, and every one of them had to start somewhere. Soccer began way, way back when someone somewhere got the smart idea to fill up a pig bladder and kick it around a field. Pickleball had its origins a little more recently and a little less disgustingly than that, in 1966, when two Washington dads (Joel Pritchard and Bill Bell) tried to think up a fun game for their families. There was an old badminton court on Pritchard's property, but no badminton racquets, so the guys rounded up some table tennis paddles and a wiffleball, and things kind of went from there. There are two theories for how pickleball got its name: (1) Joel's wife, Joan, thought that the game combines a bunch of sports the way a pickle boat uses oars-people chosen from the leftovers of other boats; (2) it was named after the Pritchards' dog, Pickles, who frequently ran off with the pickleball.

Like many sports, the game evolved over time. But it wasn't long before the funky, family-friendly game was spreading through the Pacific Northwest like wildfire. It continued to gain traction, and currently it is the fastest growing sport in the United States and is growing internationally as well.

If you would like to try pickleball, (good news) there are lots of places locally where you can play for free (a friend of mine set up her own court in her driveway). And (more good news) the equipment is not expensive. You can start with cheaper paddles and upgrade later if the spirit moves you. I love

how easy it is to pick up this game. A number of my friends who have zero experience with racquet sports learned how to play in minutes, and I now play regularly with three of them (ages range from 25 to 62). If you want to play, Google "pickleball courts near me" and you will get a list of options. (Most courts are on tennis courts, which have lines drawn for pickleball play.) The Edge Sports and Fitness in South Burlington has a bunch of indoor pickleball courts and programs for players of all ages.

And really, don't let the complexity of the scoring put you off. You will pick it up more quickly than you think. Nate Silver (the Nate Silver who predicts winners of presidential races and who also developed a system for forecasting the performance of Major League Baseball players) once said, "By playing games you can artificially speed up your learning curve to develop the right kind of thought processes." Scorekeeping in pickleball will definitely tweak your learning curve. Just think what good you will be doing for your brain while your body is moving around chasing after a yellow ball.

And so...to make a long story short, once a



Photo courtesy wikipedia.org

skeptic, I have become an enthusiast. I find that pickleball is a really joyful game. Not super-competitive, just fun. I don't know, maybe it's just me, but there's something about a wiffleball that's hard to take seriously. Which is a good thing, right? I mean, who couldn't use a little more fun in their lives...

History

Fast forward to today, and you'll find that pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the United States with international growth gaining steam. Currently, the U.S.A. Pickleball Association lists nearly 4,000 locations where you can play nationwide. To understand how pickleball's popularity has exploded to this point over the last 50 years, let's take a look at the nature of this fast-paced, friendly, and enjoyable sport.

Town

Mysteries and modern touches at Morningside Cemetery

Cynthia M. Marshall
CONTRIBUTOR

One of Charlotte’s hidden gems is Morningside Cemetery. The cemetery is tucked into a secluded hillside off Morningside Drive a short distance from Spear Street. Those familiar with the cemetery know that the names, dates and other information carved into the gravestones provide a treasure trove of historical information and insights.

Some of that history reveals sad truths about life in the 1800s and early 1900s, especially the gravestones of children who died at appallingly young ages. Readers of inscriptions such as “Little Georgie A., Son of Alonzo H. & Elvira A. Barker, Died Apr 5, 1860, AE 10 Yrs. 1 Mo” can well imagine the heartbreak of the Barker family.

The Morningside gravestones also remind us that Charlotters have answered the call as America fought wars overseas and within itself. Veterans of the Civil War, Spanish American War, World Wars I and II are buried inside the cemetery fences. The cemetery also is the final resting place for Charlotte’s sole fatality in the Vietnam War. Fred St. George was just 20 years old when he was killed in action in Vietnam.

In certain instances, the words and dates written on the headstones suggest mysteries or questions to which we may never have answers. For example, what are the odds John Naramore would outlive three wives,



Morningside Cemetery. Photo by John Quinney

including his third wife who was 60 years his junior? Did Pvt. Delial W. Magee ever see a European battlefield in 1918 or did he succumb to the Spanish flu that devastated many Army battalions prior to shipping out?

Another mystery surrounds the name of Cyrus Prindle/Pringle, perhaps the most famous individual buried at Morningside. Prindle Road in East Charlotte was home to the illustrious botanist who identified and catalogued a wide variety of plants in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The Pringle Herbarium at UVM, named in his honor, contains many of his collections. But why the different spellings of his name? Family members and long-time residents of East Charlotte have consistently used the “d” spelling; and family members, having the last word, had Prindle

etched on the headstone. Still, it appears Cyrus—for reasons unknown—may have preferred the “g” spelling, and UVM respected that preference. The plaque on the north side of the headstone referencing his professional accomplishments uses the “g” spelling and states: “Cyrus Guernesy Pringle 1838-1911 ‘The Prince of Plant Collectors.’”

Other history and fun facts about Morningside:

- The dates carved into the grave markers suggest the first person buried in Morningside was 26-year-old William Barker who died in August 1796.
- The earliest birthdate recorded on the gravestones was that of Eliphalet Bingham born in 1761, a birthdate that allowed him to witness the American Revolution.
- Old records state the cemetery was deeded from Roger Horsford to the Town of Charlotte in 1819. Just shy of a century later, March 2, 1915, Town Meeting Day, voters approved the transfer of the cemetery to the Morningside Cemetery Association. The transfer was completed in 1917, and the association manages the cemetery to this day.

- Purchasers of plots at Morningside Cemetery must be current or long-time residents of the town.

Like most small privately operated cemeteries, Morningside faces challenges. These include operating on a tight budget and striving to add modern touches to a historic and hallowed place. An update currently being explored is creation of a cremation garden in a tree grove along the cemetery’s southwest boundary. The association hopes to have the garden available by summer 2023. Many individuals and families now opt for cremation rather than casket burials, so a peaceful shaded site with specially designed plots for urns would be well-tailored to today’s preferences.

In the meantime, Charlotte residents wishing to purchase a plot in the main section of the cemetery may contact Nancy Richardson (nancy@richardsonvt.com or 802 539-2110) for additional information.

Note: John Quinney serves on the Board of Trustees of the Morningside Cemetery Association and as the interim President and Publisher of The Charlotte News.

Gardening

Using summer-dried herbs and flowers

Bonnie Kirn Donahue
EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Do you have herbs and flowers that you dried or preserved last summer still sitting in your cupboard or freezer? If so, now is a great time to pull them out and put them to good use.

Dried herbs can be used in many ways depending on their variety and flavor profile. Some might be better for sweet dishes, such as lavender and anise hyssop, and some for savory dishes, including dill and tarragon.

Before you start, check to see if there are any signs of mold, moisture or odd smells. If there are, it is best to discard these.

Mint, chamomile and other dried floral herbs are ideal for making tea. Simply place the dried leaves or flowers in a mug or teapot, and then pour in boiling water. Use about a teaspoon of herbs per mug or 1/4 cup per pot. Let steep for 3-5 minutes or to taste.

If you’re using an infuser, remove when the tea is steeped to your liking. For loose leaf tea, after steeping you can pass it through a strainer to remove the large pieces.

If you’re longing for summer, start experimenting with iced teas. You can combine different varieties of edible dried flowers to make new flavors. Adding lemon, berries or other fruit while steeping the tea allows you to test out new summer flavors.

Prior to experimenting, you may want to check with your doctor to make sure herbal teas are safe for you based on your medical history or medications.

You also can add floral or savory dried herbs to baked goods. Lavender infuses new flavor in butter cookies and other baked goods. Licorice-flavored anise hyssop can transform muffins, cakes and cookies. Savory basil, thyme and dill can turn a regular biscuit into a special treat. Experiment with how much to

add to get the desired taste.

Or add herbs directly to your butter. Beat together a stick of room-temperature butter and dried herbs, such as dill or thyme (to taste), until combined. Use it on toast, eggs, veggies, meats and other foods.

Salves, lotions or soaps are another good way to use up the dried herbs you harvested. Calendula flowers, which dry in vibrant yellows and oranges, can be used for body products, as well as teas, adding a touch of their lovely summer color.

If you froze herbs, they can add a surprising summer flavor to cooked dishes. Before using, discard any herbs that are freezer-burned. Make sure to separate the soft leaves from the woody stems while they are still frozen. Frozen herbs thaw really quickly and can easily turn to mush.

Still have tomatoes in the freezer from last summer? Or maybe a can of tomatoes on the shelf? Use some of those frozen or dried herbs, such as basil, oregano, parsley and garlic to make a quick homemade marinara sauce.

Rethink your weekly protein dishes. How would a marinade or sauce made with dill, cilantro or parsley boost dishes in your meal rotation each week?

Soups are another great way to use extra dried herbs. A quick internet search for recipes that include your herbs will bring up so many possibilities. This could also be the perfect time to try a dish from another culture or cuisine.

While you wait for warmer weather, dig into your pantry or freezer and use the lovely tastes of last summer, to tide you over until you can harvest fresh again.

Bonnie Kirn Donahue is a UVM Extension Master Gardener and landscape designer from central Vermont.

Outdoors

Two bobcat encounters



Above: The chickens live in a house and a run, mounted on wheels or skids, and the entire set up is rotated around the garden. Below is full view of the chicken tractor. Photos by John Quinney

John Quinney

This story was inspired by Meg Berlin’s wonderful bobcat photo on the cover of the March 25 *Charlotte News*.

Some gardeners use chicken tractors to recycle kitchen scraps, help control pests, and to provide organic fertilizer. The chickens live in a house and a run, mounted on wheels or skids, and the entire set up is rotated around the garden.



We built our chicken tractor in August 2010, starting with an old garden cart. I cut a hole in the bottom of the cart, added a grill, nesting boxes and a shingled roof. Next came a small run, enclosed in hardware cloth and secured to the house.

We bought four young chickens and moved them in. It didn’t take long for bobcats to find the chickens.

Late one September afternoon, we noticed that the chickens had retreated into their house. That was unusual. They normally spent most of their days pecking and scratching the soil in search of insects and scraps.

Then we noticed the bobcat. It was crouched low, about 10 feet beyond the chicken tractor, eying it intensely. The chickens were quiet. The bobcat waited. So did we.

After a few minutes, a chicken walked from the house into the run. The bobcat pounced, apparently not seeing the hardware cloth that stood between bobcat and chicken. The chicken squawked and ran for the house. The bobcat bounced back off the hardware cloth, landed hard, then slowly got up and walked away, defeated.

In addition to using chickens for pest control, for many years we relied on our cat, Espresso. He was a superb hunter and kept our voles, chipmunks and mice in check. Occasionally, he got a young rabbit. But by June 2011, Espresso was unable to hunt and in obvious discomfort. We put him down and buried him in his hunting grounds.

With no cat around, we were able to put up bird feeders and attract chickadees, cardinals, juncos, grackles, woodpeckers, cedar waxwings and more. We also put up some birdhouses, looking to attract tree swallows, known to be voracious insect eaters.

This past COVID winter, I built bat houses, hoping to get some help with mosquito control, and a couple of barred owl houses, with an eye to controlling mice and vole populations.

But rabbits are still a problem. They eat young blueberry stems and find salad crops and carrots to be irresistible. We use fence, netting and row covers to keep them out, but still lose some crops.

Here’s where bobcats re-enter the story. On a Sunday morning in early March, my wife, Colleen, called out, “John, quick, come look at this.” Strolling through the garden to the west of our house, past the statue of St. Francis, we saw a fine-looking, mature, leonine bobcat with a big rabbit between its jaws! Unfortunately, the cat moved away before we could get our phone cameras aimed.

This growing season, we hope to get help in managing garden pests from tree swallows, bats, barred owls, rotational plantings and beneficial insects. But until that March morning, we had never realized that bobcats were another piece of the puzzle. Just another reason that we were happy to see them.

Grazing the day away



Philo Ridge Farm Photo by Lee Krohn

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CSWD Drop-Off Centers Schedule

LOCATIONS	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Burlington Food Scraps Only	Closed	Closed	Closed	8-3:30	Closed	8-3:30
Essex	Closed	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30
Hinesburg	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	8-3:30
Milton	Closed	Closed	8-3:30	Closed	8-3:30	8-3:30
Richmond	Closed	8-3:30	Closed	8-3:30	Closed	8-3:30
South Burlington	8-3:30	8-3:30	Closed	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30
Williston	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30	8-3:30

☒ Closed ☐ Open ☒ Open NEW Day | All facilities are closed on Sundays.
Days and times are subject to change.

www.cswd.net | (802) 872-8111



Charlotter gets covid vaccine in Bhutan

VINCE CROCKENBERG

On March 24, the Kingdom of Bhutan, a small, mountainous country between India and China, began a campaign to vaccinate its entire adult population against COVID-19 with Astra-Zeneca shots donated by India. On April 5, the Bhutanese government announced it had provided the first dose of the vaccine to 468,297 people out of an eligible population of 500,328; the second dose will follow in eight to 12 weeks, depending on when additional doses from India arrive.

Among those vaccinated was Charlotter Erick Crockenberg, who is working in Bhutan with U.S.-based company Mountain Hazlenuts, the largest private employer in the country. He, along with thousands of Bhutanese, traveled to schools and public buildings throughout the country to receive their shots, with some vaccinators walking for days through the mountains to reach people in remote villages. As with all such public events in Bhutan, the initial rollout of the campaign began with gho-clad public officials and religious leaders chanting Buddhist prayers.

Although roughly half the country lives below the poverty line, the country has provided free healthcare for all citizens since 1971. According to the World Health Organization, programs are in place to address the country's public health challenges, which may help explain the speed with which the vaccinations took place.

Bhutan identified its first case of COVID on March 6, 2020, a 76-year-old American tourist who had traveled into the country from India. On March 22, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck closed the country's land borders, and on March 31 the prime minister extended the quarantine period in Bhutan from 14 to 21 days.

To date, Bhutan has recorded 891 cases of COVID-19, and just one death, a 34-year-old who suffered from liver disease and died in January.



Left: Erick getting his dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine.



Bhutan Facts and Figures

- Total population: 754,000
- Size: 14,824 square miles, slightly bigger than Maryland and half-again as large as Vermont (9,616 square miles)
- Government: Constitutional monarchy, established in 2008
- State religion: Mahayana Buddhism

Far left: Marker on Erick's thumb indicates he got his shot.

Left: Residents of Changphle village in the Bumthang District of Bhutan line up to get their COVID-19 shots.

Bottom left: Erick and two of his Mountain Hazlenuts colleagues, Jigme Norbu, left, and Dorji Gyeltsen, middle, pointing to their sore injection sites.



Town

Library news



Margaret Woodruff
DIRECTOR

April is a busy month, indoors and out. Many of us are planning gardens and others planning outings as we move into warmer, freer days. There's no exception at the Charlotte Library!

We are hosting a variety of events for Citizen Science month (see box below). In addition, we are partnering with the Pierson Library in Shelburne for two programs in recognition of Fair Housing Month. And we are fortunate to have Ellen Ecker Ogden join us for a discussion of her latest book, *The New Heirloom Garden*. We hope you can join us for one or all.

Take & Make for April

DIY Terrarium: Get your green thumbs ready and make a mini terrarium for your desk or countertop.

Upcoming Programs Online

Please contact the library to sign up for programs. Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org Phone: 425-3864

Citizen Science Month: April is Citizen Science month and the Charlotte Library is highlighting ways your family can share and contribute in scientific research. Throughout the month, a series of virtual presentations will showcase ways your family can get involved with activities in your own backyard or around Vermont.

UVM Extension Service and the Lake Champlain Sea Grant

(uvm.edu/seagrant/home)

Wednesday, April 14, 6:30 p.m.

The Lake Champlain Sea Grant develops and shares science-based knowledge to benefit the Lake Champlain basin. Join Ashley Eaton, a scientist from the University of Vermont Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory, to talk about the health of Lake Champlain, cyanobacteria blooms, invasive species and the Charlotte shoreline. Register for the Zoom session here: <http://bit.ly/3cakYsj>

Got Bats? Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

(vtfishandwildlife.com)

Wednesday, April 28, 6 p.m.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department needs your help monitoring summer bat activity around the state to help them make informed decisions about the welfare and long-term conservation of these important mammals. Alyssa Bennett, the Small Mammals Biologist for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, will share with us her knowledge and lots of great photos of the bats of Vermont and how you can help monitor their populations as a citizen scientist! Click here to join the meeting: <http://bit.ly/3ICBxQS>.

Book Chat

Fridays, 10 a.m.

Join Margaret for a virtual stroll through the library collections, highlighting a different theme or topic each week.

The New Heirloom Garden Book Discussion

Fridays, April 16 and April 23, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

What is an heirloom garden? Charlotte Seed Library and Charlotte Grange invite you to a two-part presentation/discussion about gardening with heirloom varieties and saving their seeds, based on the book, *The New Heirloom Garden*. Following an introductory session with seed library coordinator Karen Tuininga, award-winning Vermont author and kitchen garden designer Ellen Ecker Ogden will lead us through the process of creating and enjoying a home food garden with an eye toward both beauty and productivity. Register in advance here: <https://bit.ly/3lnNcmg>.

To borrow a copy of the book from the Library (with the option to buy), contact seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org.



Mystery Book Group: Spider Woman's Daughter by Anne Hillerman

Monday, April 19, 10 a.m.

Legendary tribal sleuths Leaphorn and Chee are back! It happened in an instant—after a breakfast with colleagues, Navajo Nation Police Officer Bernadette Manualito saw a truck squeal into the parking lot and heard a crack of gunfire. When the dust cleared, someone very close to her was lying

on the asphalt in a pool of blood. Copies available for porch pickup at the library and audiobook via Hoopla for Charlotte patrons.

Book Discussion: Evicted

Tuesday, April 20, 7 p.m.

Join us for a discussion of the Pulitzer-Prize winning book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond. Moderated by Kevin Unrath, librarian at Pierson Library in Shelburne. Copies available at the Charlotte Library. Advance registration is required for Zoom link. *This event is part of April Fair Housing Month and is co-sponsored by the Fair Housing Project of CVOEO and Pierson Library.*

Men's Book Group: Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed

Wednesday, April 21, 7:30 p.m.

Brilliant, illuminating and immensely absorbing, *Collapse* is destined to take its place as one of the essential books of our time, raising the urgent question: How can our world best avoid committing ecological suicide? Print copies available for porch pickup and ebook available via Libby for Charlotte patrons.

Film Discussion: Priced Out

Thursday, April 22, 7 p.m.

Facilitated by Jessica Hyman, Fair Housing Project, CVOEO with Introduction by Lydia

Clemmons, Clemmons Family Farm.

Lydia Clemmons of the Clemmons Family Farm, one of the few African-American-owned farms in Vermont, starts us off with an update on the farm and strategies the family is using to hold onto the farm even as property taxes rise and pressure mounts to sell. Jessica Hyman then facilitates a discussion of the documentary *Priced Out: Portland's History of Segregation and Redlining*. Please consider watching *Priced Out* (1 hr.) and *Out of the Ashes, Born Again* (6 min.) prior to the discussion. Both are available free on YouTube.

This event is part of April Fair Housing Month in collaboration with the Clemmons Family Farm, Fair Housing Project of CVOE, and Pierson Library.

Please register in advance for the Zoom link.

For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for our monthly newsletter: Charlotte Library Newsletter.

The library building is closed to the public, but books and other materials available for porch pickup.

Porch pickup hours:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday:

11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Please call or email to let us know what we can set out for you! Not sure what to read? We're happy to help select books for readers of all ages!

Library Contact Information

Margaret Woodruff, Director
Cheryl Sloan, Youth Services Librarian
Susanna Kahn, Tech Librarian
Phone: (802) 425-3864
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Town

Charlotte Senior Center news



Carolyn Kulik
SENIOR CENTER
DIRECTOR

"Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time."

~ Jon Kabat-Zinn,
Full Catastrophe Living

"Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Knowing grass, I can appreciate persistence."

~ Hal Borland

When it comes to re-opening the CSC, it looks like a little patience is still in order. Despite the recent announcements that senior centers in Vermont may open again, there are still some official restrictions that need clarification and will require adaptation and approval. As safety is still a priority, we will not be returning to the Before Times quite yet. Things will be changing soon, though. Stay tuned.

Courses starting soon

Directions for **How to Register** and **How to Pay** appear at the end of this article and also in the upper right corner of the Spring Schedule.

4/14 - Conflict Resolution with Mark Williams

Wednesday mornings, 11–12:00.
Dates: 4/14–5/19. (6 weeks)
Register by 4/12. Fee: \$48 for the series.
Using role-playing and mediation exercises, participants in this 6-week course will learn practical skills, such as how to calm an angry person down, how to empathize with a person with whom you disagree, and more. ~ Mark Williams is a licensed couples counselor; however, please note that this course is not intended for couples.

The following course is new and does not appear in the Spring Schedule. The March watercolor workshop proved the online format to be not only doable—but enjoyable for everyone.

4/13 – Watercolor Basics+ For Spring with Lynn Cummings

Tuesdays, 12–3 p.m.
Dates: April 13, 20 & 27 (3 weeks)
Register by: 4/9. Fee: \$108 for the series.
For new watercolor painters or those who haven't painted in a while, we'll be exploring topics such as painting the negative space, doing creative backgrounds and splashy spring florals. Mixing fresh, clear spring colors and avoiding mud as well as elements of design will be covered also. Class will be held online via Zoom. Upon registering, email the instructor for the supply list: Lynn.Cummings@uvm.edu.

4/16 – Writing Your Life Story B with Laurie McMillan

Friday mornings, 11–12:30.
Session B: 4/16–5/7.
Register by: 4/13. Fee: \$48.
How can you make your memories interesting

to a reader? Explore storytelling techniques and utilize in-class exercises to help launch your own meaningful and important stories. Bring your favorite journal and pen. Newcomers are welcome.

4/20 – French Conversation Circle B with Alysse Anton

Tuesdays, 1:30–2:30 p.m.
Session B: 4/20–5/25.
Register by: 4/16. Fee: \$48.
These relaxed, fun circles are designed for intermediate/advanced speakers who want to improve their skills and confidence.

4/23 – French Coffee Club B with Alysse Anton

Fridays, 9–10 a.m. Session B: 4/23–5/28.
Register by: 4/20. Fee: \$48.
Have engaging French conversation with your morning coffee. This course is designed for high-beginner/low-intermediate French speakers who are able to carry on a basic conversation, but who would like to improve confidence and fluidity discussing a variety of topics.

4/26 – Book Discussion Group: *Walking Each Other Home*

Mondays, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Dates: 4/26 & 5/17.
Register by: 4/23. No fee.
This facilitated group began with a discussion of *Walking Each Other Home*, and they are now reading *Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death* by Joan Halifax. The group now welcomes newcomers.

And don't forget to consider signing up for CSC's wide range of ongoing exercise and health courses that can be joined at any time during the season: **Chair Yoga, Essentrics™, Gentle Yoga, Pilates, Pilates PLUS, Tai Chi for Beginners—and Mindfulness Meditation Practice.**

Talks on Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

These talks do *not* require advance registration and are always free. The Zoom invitation/link to the talks are posted on the website the day before at CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. The link also appears in Front Porch Forum for that week.

4/14: Designing Sacred Space: Discovery with Ann Vivian

It's likely each of us can recall times in our lives when we have felt embraced by sacred space. What are characteristics of spaces we experience—or remember—or imagine—that feel sacred to us? What does the idea of sacred space contribute to nurturing and sustaining community? Ann will talk about her experience designing sacred spaces and modifying others for religious communities, as well as share a few thoughts on some spaces that have particularly influenced her work. ~ Ann Vivian, a partner at G-V-V (Guillot-Vivian-Viehmman) Architects in Burlington and a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design and Andover Newton Theological School, has enjoyed the opportunities to merge profession and spirituality in her work.

4/21: Vermont in Deep Time with Craig Heindel

Take a geologic journey through earth's history, and learn how Vermont, the Champlain Valley and New England were formed. How did it happen that Vermont's



Green Mountains are more similar to the mountains of Sweden and Norway and to the Atlas Mountains of North Africa than to the Adirondacks and the White Mountains? ~ Craig Heindel, a consulting groundwater geologist, has lived in the Champlain Valley and explored the region since his graduate-school days at UVM in the mid-1970s.

4/28: Conservation of Your Heirlooms with Rick Kerschner

Objects Conservator Rick Kerschner will evaluate your heirloom's condition online and advise on how to preserve it, whether conservation treatment is necessary, and how to find a qualified conservator. He cannot address value. Join the meeting using the Zoom mobile phone app, and place heirlooms on a table so all sides can be easily viewed using your phone. This virtual platform enables viewing furniture, paintings or other heirlooms difficult to transport. ~ Richard Kerschner is Conservator Emeritus, Shelburne Museum.

5/05: The Electoral College: A Disaster for Democracy with Jesse Wegman

How can we tolerate the Electoral College when every vote does not count the same, and the candidate who gets the most votes can lose? There is a way we can at long last make every vote in the United States count—and restore belief in our democratic system. ~ Jesse Wegman is a member of the *New York Times* editorial board, where he has written about the Supreme Court and legal affairs since 2013.

5/13 (Thurs.): "Live Free or Die" in China with Tao Sun

Blood Drive

4/15: A friendly reminder that the **Red Cross Blood Drive** is **Thursday, April 15, from 2–7 p.m.** at the Senior Center, although the building is closed for other activities. If you wish to donate urgently needed blood, please go to RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS. Strict health protocols will be followed for the safety of those participating in this event.

Art Exhibits

The Senior Center's monthly art exhibits are suspended until further notice. Returning soon!

Keep up the good work with masks and social distancing. Almost there.

How to Register for a Course

All courses are online and all require registration in order to receive the invitation/link.

To register, email your name, mailing address and phone number to: CSCZoom@gmavt.net. Be sure to note the title of the course in the subject line of the email. You will receive confirmation that you are registered. The invitation/link for the course will be sent to you by the instructor the week that classes start.

How to Pay

If there is a fee, kindly pay by check (made out to CSC) and send to: P.O. Box 207, Charlotte, VT 05445. Be sure to note the full title of the course in the memo line.

- For ongoing exercise courses, please pay at the *end* of each month for the classes attended. Unless otherwise stated, tally your attendance and figure \$5/class.

- For courses with set dates, please pay at the start and note the fee listed in the course description.

If fees present a hardship, please inquire about a scholarship by sending an email to CSCZoom@gmavet.net. We want everyone to be able to keep themselves healthy and engaged, especially during this challenging time.

Questions? Need help with Zooming? Please email: CSCZoom@gmavt.net, or leave a message at (802) 425-6345.

For expanded descriptions, as well as additional courses and talks, please visit CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org. The mission of the Senior Center is to serve those 50 and up; some course enrollments are limited, and if a course is not full, younger participants are welcome to enroll. Feel free to leave a message anytime at 425-6345; voicemail is checked frequently.

Charlotte Senior Center
(802) 425-6345
CharlotteSeniorCenterVT.org

Into The Woods

Death in the forest: The profound process of tree mortality

Ethan Tapper

To understand how to take care of forests, we first need to understand what they are and how they work. While most people’s understanding of them starts and ends with trees, forests are complex, dynamic communities comprised of many different organisms and the processes that affect them. While forests function as systems in many ways, they are not utopias. Organisms compete with one other, parasitize each other, eat and destroy each other. Within forests, one of the incredible processes that make forests work—and one that we need to learn to accept—is tree death.

When trees die it may seem startling or sad; the end of a decades or centuries-long life, the loss of a once beautiful and healthy living thing. To the forest, however, the death of a tree is something much more profound, supporting critical ecological functions and processes and providing habitat for many native organisms. I think of a tree as having a “biological life,” (when it is “alive” in a traditional sense) and also an “ecological life” (the tree’s overall influence on forest ecology, which can persist for decades or centuries after it dies).

The death of a tree can happen in a moment—like when they are snapped or uprooted in a windstorm, but it usually happens over time, the product of numerous interrelated factors called “stacking stressors.” For instance, a tree’s branch is broken by heavy ice and snow. This wound is colonized by fungi, which breaks down and softens the tree’s wood, paving the way for wood-boring beetles and

other arthropods (bugs). Searching for these bugs and their larvae, woodpeckers excavate “cavities” (holes) in the tree. Cavities create still more opportunities for fungi, bacteria and arthropods to colonize the tree. As these stressors compound on one another, the stress eventually becomes too much and the tree dies.

Tree death is often a biological process—the product of a rich assemblage of organisms taking advantage of their natural habitat. While it’s tempting to vilify fungi, bacteria and bugs for “killing our trees,” a more holistic understanding of forests reveals that these organisms are actually critical parts of ecosystems. They help break down and recycle dead trees and plants, enriching soils and feeding future generations of trees. In facilitating tree death, they create “snags,” (“dead-standing” trees) and “cavity trees,” both of which are used by a huge number of animals as nesting and denning habitat. Once the tree falls, “dead” wood on the forest floor stores carbon, improves the forest’s ability to absorb water, provides a place for trees like yellow birch and hemlock to take root, and provides habitat for underground *mycorrhizal* fungal networks critical our forests’ ability to function. Dead wood is critical habitat for salamanders, the “apex predator of the forest floor,” which account for the most biomass of any vertebrate predator in the northern forest (meaning that if you weighed all the coyotes and all the salamanders in the forest, the salamanders would weigh more). Dead trees are such a rich habitat that they can contain as much as four times as much living biomass as



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living trees.

Tree death also provides opportunities for forests to become diverse and complex. Openings in the forest canopy are soon filled by “regeneration,” the abundant growth of young trees and plants. Over time, this cycle of death and regeneration creates forests with a rich mosaic of different sizes, ages and species of trees. Forests like this, supporting a diversity of bird and wildlife species, store more carbon and are more *resilient* and *adaptive* in a changing climate.

As a forester, my main concern is keeping the forest, as a system, healthy. To this end, tree death, just like tree life, is something to be celebrated, not avoided. It can even be something that we use as a tool in our

stewardship of forests, using the cutting of trees to create a more diverse, complex, and resilient forest, one that is full of life in a more holistic sense.

While it might make us uncomfortable, understanding the profound and important role that tree death plays in forests is a critical part of learning how to take care of them. We should strive not to keep every tree alive, but rather to keep the forest vibrant and whole. Healthy forests not only tolerate death—they require it.

Ethan Tapper is the Chittenden County Forester. He can be reached at ethan.tapper@vermont.gov; (802) 585-9099, or at his office at 111 West Street, Essex Junction.

Charlotte Fire and Rescue Log

MARCH 2021

Monday, March 1

16:28:45 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Tuesday, March 2

0:54:57 Standby-No Services or Support Provided

Wednesday, March 3

11:58:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS
10:12:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Friday, March 5

18:19:14 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Saturday, March 6

16:38:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS
11:52:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS
9:10:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Tuesday, March 9

20:18:00 Canceled on Scene (No Patient Contact)

Wednesday, March 10

16:15:00 Canceled on Scene (No Patient Contact)

Thursday, March 11

19:46:00 Patient Evaluated, No Treatment/Transport Required
10:17:00 Canceled on Scene (No Patient Contact)

3:27:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Friday, March 12

17:30:00 Patient Evaluated, Released (AMA)

Tuesday, March 16

19:45:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS
16:36:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Wednesday, March 17

19:48:03 Patient Treated, Transferred Care to Another EMS

Thursday, March 18

7:10:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Saturday, March 20

18:44:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Monday, March 22

21:30:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Tuesday, March 23

4:54:00 Patient Evaluated, No Treatment/Transport Required

Wednesday, March 24

12:41:00 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Thursday, March 25

23:51:00 Intercept
16:08:12 Patient Treated, Transported by EMS
15:40:41 Patient Evaluated, No Treatment/Transport Required

Friday, March 26

12:43:07 Standby-No Services or Support Provided

Monday, March 29

19:59:00 Standby-No Services or Support Provided

Tuesday, March 30

7:33:00 AM Patient Treated, Transported by EMS

Wednesday, March 31

19:07:00 Patient Evaluated, No Treatment/Transport Required

Classifieds

Reach your friends and neighbors for only \$12 per issue. (Payment must be sent before issue date.) Please limit your ad to 35 words or fewer and send it to The Charlotte News Classifieds, P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445 or email ads@thecharlottenews.org.

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The tell is in the smell

Skunks in Vermont

Linda Radimer and Mary Van Vleck
CONTRIBUTORS

All creatures are endowed with some means of defense. Over time, ancestors of the striped skunk of New England developed a memorable and unique means of warning possible attackers. When it feels threatened, it stomps its front feet and puffs up as much as possible to suggest strongly that you cease and desist from your forward progress. If the trespasser into its space continues to threaten the skunk, it will turn around, exposing its anal glands and the bare skin around them, and eject a pungent stream or mist that can go 10 feet toward the perceived threat. Its aim can be remarkably accurate. Besides smelling terribly, its spray is highly irritating to the eyes and nose. It's also very difficult to eradicate the acrid odor afterwards, from the skin, fur or one's clothes.

Skunks are frequently found around suburban homesteads, farmyards and chicken coops, where they survive nicely, searching for food and seeking protection under porches and buildings or nearby shrubbery. They move slowly on very short legs and are remarkably docile, counting on their powerful and offensive odor to deter predators. Fortunately, they tolerate being around humans quite well. If you come upon one unexpectedly, it is best to move away slowly and quietly. The skunk is likely to go about its business, eating or sniffing around for food, as long as you are at least 10 feet away. At night, if walking outside and you suspect there are skunks around, be sure to carry a flashlight.

The skunk is omnivorous and eats a variety of plants and small animals, such as seeds and grains, corn, leaves, apples, berries, insects, worms, small mammals and even rabbits. In turn, it is prey to great horned owls, coyotes, foxes and the occasional dog, who will surely be sprayed if it is aggressive. Part of a skunk's defensiveness comes from having winged predators, such as the great horned owl, swoop down upon them to carry them away.

While skunks are generally active in the evenings, they may also be around during the daytime, whenever the temperatures are above 30°. Skunks fall into a deep sleep in the colder winter months, but they do not truly hibernate; when the temperature rises above freezing, they will likely wake up and wander about looking for food.

Skunks are generally six to 12 pounds, similar to a cat, and up to 32" from the tip of the nose to the tip of its tail. They are distinctively black and white. Each animal varies in its patterning, but in general they have black heads with a pointed snout; a narrow white stripe runs down that snout and extends backward to a white area on the back of the head where it divides into two stripes extending down the back, like the letter "Y." Its big fluffy tail usually has both black and white patterning, though each animal's tail is quite individualistic. Though rarely, albino, brown and all black variations have all been reported.

If you come upon scat that is three inches or less in length, irregular in shape and contains insect parts, it is likely from a skunk.



Photo contributed

Skunks will take advantage of porches, woodpiles and other animal burrows as dens if they can find an opening of 4–6 inches wide to enter. There are peaceful means to encourage them to change their living quarters if they make you nervous, but from May to July their dens are likely to harbor young. Eliminating the mother at this time may lead to damage to your home as she attempts to free them, or the young will die without their mother's protection, resulting in odors and insect infestations.

Although a skunk may tear up your lawn looking for grubs, many people appreciate the natural, chemical-free eradication of these lawn-killing pests, particularly Japanese and June beetles, mice and moles.

If you have skunks on your property and wish to discourage them, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife has four recommendations:

1. Remain calm and speak softly if you come upon a skunk unexpectedly, then move slowly away, giving it little reason to be afraid of you.
2. Secure your garbage so that skunks cannot feed on your discarded edibles.
3. Keep your bird feeder areas clean; do not scatter seed on the ground, and if one or more skunks is regularly seen around the feeders, then remove the feeders until the skunk has left the area.
4. If you have pets, you may prefer to have a flood light to alert you to any skunks around; be sure to check your yard for skunks before letting your pets out at night. And plan to feed your pets indoors or remove their dishes as soon as they are finished eating.

Skunks are a natural and valuable part of the New England ecosystem, and fortunately we have lived quite successfully alongside these intriguing animals for ages, though with an occasional spraying—mostly of our too-inquisitive, sometimes foolish dogs or a passing car. And hopefully for each of them and you, one spraying is enough for a lifetime.

Linda Radimer and Mary Van Vleck are members of the Charlotte Conservation Commission.

The commission meets the fourth Tuesday of the month, and everyone is welcome. It currently meets by Zoom, and the invitation to join a CCC meeting is generally published 1-2 days in advance in the Front Porch Forum. If not there, please contact a commission member or Dean Bloch at the Town Offices.

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