

The Charlotte News

July 24, 2025

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Andrew Zehner
Contributor

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- Delivered 1,250 free hard copy newspapers to 1,765 households and businesses in Charlotte;

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Energy committee works on energy efficiency

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The Charlotte Energy and Climate Action Committee is in a race against time and the whims of a federal government hostile to renewable energy to get advancements to the town's solar energy system before financial incentives go away.

The committee, which has changed its name from the Charlotte Energy Committee to broaden its focus, is working to get approval for additional solar panels beyond those already on the town garage before deadlines that would end incentives that make solar energy more affordable.

There are a number of hurdles the energy committee needs to clear before a Dec. 25 deadline when these incentives are set to go away. One incentive would take 30 percent off the cost of adding the additional solar capacity to the town's system.

Big things that need to happen in order to make the Dec. 25 deadline are getting selectboard approval to hold a town vote on the project, holding that vote and, if approved by voters, starting construction on the project.

As part of that effort, Jim Hodson of the Charlotte Energy and Climate Action Committee and Tim Post, an energy consultant with GreenEdge Energy Solutions, have held two presentations on the town energy modernization project at the library. Hodson said he's heard the project will be on the agenda for the selectboard's upcoming meeting this Monday, July 28. Besides an update about where the project is now, he expects there will be a discussion about what next steps should be taken to get news about the proposal out to residents.

The proposal is to add more solar panels to



Courtesy photo

The roof of the town garage and its solar energy panels shown from the north.

the town's fledgling solar energy system that, as of now, are only located on the new town garage.

The goal is to produce all of the electricity needs of the garage, the town hall, the library, the senior center and the fire and rescue department by solar energy. Currently, a large portion of the electricity used in these building is being generated by the panels on the garage, but the proponents would like for it all to be. They want the bill for electricity for town buildings to be zero.

According to their PowerPoint presentation, it would take an investment of about \$400,000

to accommodate all of these buildings' electric power needs for the next 25 years, saving the town \$563,000 over those two and a half decades while also eliminating 2.3 million pounds of CO2 being added to the atmosphere by fossil fuels.

Post compared that amount of carbon dioxide to releasing more than 35 million balloons filled with CO2 over Charlotte.

He said they have identified five locations where additional solar panels could be added with a minimum of hassle and cost — the town garage, the senior center, the fire station

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Selectboard blocks energy committee donation by doing nothing

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

The Charlotte Selectboard did not reject a request from the energy commission for approval of a donation to Sustainable Charlotte for building window inserts to help insulate homes.

But the board did not approve the request so, in effect, the request was denied.

Members of Charlotte Energy and Climate Action Committee wanted to give a donation to Sustainable Charlotte for \$999 for construction of window inserts to improve insulation in affordable housing.

Selectboard members and town clerk and treasurer Mary Mead objected because a request for a donation wasn't submitted during budget season when other nonprofit organizations and town committees made appeals for donations from the town.

Board chair Lee Krohn introduced the subject by explaining that the project is part of the Window Dressers program where volunteers build window inserts to better seal the homes



of people who might not otherwise be able to afford them.

Krohn's understanding is that the committee has been doing this work but has found that Sustainable Charlotte can "do it faster, cheaper and better."

Board member Natalie Kanner said the window insert work had been presented as donation, but she suggested it might work better to submit it as an invoice.

"The question is: Is it a donation?" Kanner asked. Or is "this is more of an expense?"

If it is determined that it is a donation, Kanner wondered: "Do we want to sort of override the fact that we didn't approve

donations for Sustainable Charlotte in the budget cycle and allow this relationship to go forward?"

Member Frank Tenney said those on the board have gone "around and around" about donations before.

The board's perception is that residents want to choose what organizations the town donates their taxes to, and the selectboard has tried in the past to limit the allocation of donations to budget season, so all the donations are on the ballot for voters to decide.

Mike Yantachka, who was attending the meeting online, said he is a member of both the energy committee and Sustainable Charlotte. The energy committee runs a program helping residents, particularly those with funding challenges, to weatherize their homes. As part of the program, the energy committee donates materials to do the work.

Over the years, one of the items the energy committee has given to help people weatherize their homes is plastic sheeting. The

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SOLAR

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and the town hall. They are waiting to make a finalized proposal until they have a firm assessment of where to add solar panels in order to increase the capacity by 60-80,000 kilowatt hours a year.

In the first year of the existing solar panels’ operation, they produced almost 122,000 kilowatts of electricity, and this was in a year electrical production was almost flat for the month of February because the panels were covered by snow. All of the town buildings used almost 157,000 kilowatts during that time, so it would take just over 35,000 kilowatts to make up the difference.

However, the project proposes increasing the amount of kilowatt hours per year more than this difference because the plan is to install energy-efficient heat pumps, replacing aging furnaces and air conditioners, so the electricity used would go up but the use of fossil fuels like oil would be eliminated.

Ferry Road to have one more road closure July 31

After being closed from Sunday evening through Monday evening, Ferry Road will be closed again at the railroad crossing north of town to all traffic while maintenance and paving work is done next Thursday, July 31, midnight-10 p.m.

Once this paving is complete, the crossing will reopen and the project will be finalized.

During the closure, no traffic will be permitted to cross the tracks. Clearly marked detour routes will be in place. Please plan accordingly and follow all posted signage, Frontier Railroad said in a release.

Post was hired as a consultant as part of a three-phase project with each phase contingent upon selectboard approval before the next begins. The selectboard approved the first phase, or milestone, and the fee for that was paid by a grant the energy committee received.

Initially, Post studied 12 possible sites for adding more solar panels. Now, the project has been trimmed to five possible sites as it enters milestone two. The selectboard has indicated the project should continue. The town will not owe any money for the project until it gets to milestone three, when a contractor is chosen and construction starts.

During milestone two, requests for proposals have been issued to get bids on installing additional solar panels at some configuration of the five sites arrived at during milestone one. Solar panels would not be installed at every one of the five sites, but at some configuration of those sites that should produce the amount of electricity that is wanted.

There is urgency to this effort, Post said, because of changes in the regulatory environment on both the state and national level.

“We have lost quite a bit of some of our most amazing Vermont advantages for going solar,” Post said. “We’re at a point now where a very, very significant jump down in value is going to happen on the solar side over the next six months.”

Nonetheless, he said, Vermont and Massachusetts still have probably the most advantageous net metering benefits in the United States.

“We’re still at a pretty good spot right now, so it’s sort of like use it or lose it time,” he said.

Benefits for adding solar panels to buildings have been going down over the last 10-12 years, he said. More reductions in advantages for going solar are expected as a result of the adjustments the so-called Big Beautiful Bill make to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, eliminating many unobligated funds. This

could include \$115,000 a year for five years that had been allocated to Charlotte for this solar project.

One of the incentives that has gone away, or at least diminished, is the ability to build up credits for excess energy that a solar array creates over what a building uses. Over the last decade, the ability to store up credits for unused electricity has gone down.

In the old days before meters were digital, you could actually see a meter spin backward when a solar array was producing more power than a building was using, Post said, and users could store up credits. Now, credits from excess electrical production have to be used within a year. After that they go away, becoming electricity the power companies can sell without any compensation.

So, the energy committee is only proposing producing enough electricity to meet the needs of the town buildings.

The group is anxious to get selectboard approval on holding a vote and then voter approval on the project because, in order to qualify for net-metering incentives, work on the project will need to begin before Dec. 25.

Hodson said the current selectboard has been supportive of the project and understands the time constraints and the need to move it along.

Besides increasing the amount of electricity being created by solar panels, the proposed project calls for switching town buildings from oil to heat pumps.

“Heat pumps are sort of the wave of the future here in the United States. They’re the wave of the past everywhere else,” Post said. “Heat pumps have been popular in Europe and Asia for over 20 years. The technology is very, very, very mature, and people understand that the efficiency of heat pumps is absolutely unquestioned at this point. The data is astounding.”

Heating with heat pumps is 60-70 percent more efficient than fossil fuels, and the same equipment takes care of both heating and cooling.

Reductions in the ability to take advantage of group net metering is another reason the committee and supporters of the project are rushed. The town garage solar panels were installed just before this ability became more restricted. Now, the policy has changed so that only buildings next to or across the street from a solar array can be net metered. The town garage was grandfathered in just before this restriction went into place.

The switch to more solar energy generation is a good long-term investment, Post argued, saying it is a myth that solar panels only last 20-25 years. Panels degrade at less than half a percent per year. After 25 years, a solar array should just have dropped to 90 percent of its original capacity. After 50 years, it should have dropped to 80 percent of its original capacity.

“If you have a system that’s making, let’s say, 25,000 kilowatt hours a year, after 25 years, it’s still going to make around 22,000 kilowatt hours a year,” Post said. “So, solar is a great investment.”

The current focus has been narrowed down to studying the feasibility of adding roof panels on the senior center and the fire and rescue building and ground-mounted sun-tracking solar arrays behind the fire and rescue building and the town hall.

Acknowledging that making the deadline to qualify for having 30 percent of the project paid for is going to be difficult, Hodson said, “We can try. And if we don’t make it, we don’t make it. But at least we can try.”



Mission Statement

To engage and inform Charlotte and nearby communities by:

- Publishing rigorous, in-depth reporting on town affairs.
- Providing a home for stories from our neighbors and friends.
- Reporting on how other towns have addressed challenges similar to our own.

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The editor makes final decisions on the stories that are published 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 are independent of all sources of financial support.

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The Charlotte News has adopted the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as the touchstone to guide newsroom practices. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is built on four principles:

- Seek truth and report it.
- Minimize harm.
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- Be accountable and transparent.

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Consistent with our mission, The Charlotte News publishes letters to the editor, opinion pieces and obituaries submitted by our readers. All such materials are subject to review and approval by the editor in accordance with the standards and requirements listed on our website at charlottenewsvt.org/about.

Send submissions, questions, photos, etc. to scooter@thecharlottenews.org.

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Grange on the Green



Photo by Lee Krohn

Vermont singer-songwriter Patti Casey (left) and Vermont Poet Laureate Bianca Stone at summer’s first Grange on the Green concert, July 10. Prior to the concert, Stone read from her poetry in the packed Quinlan Schoolhouse with the audience sitting in 150-year-old school desks. She also kicked off the concert with a poem. Then, Casey and Tom MacKenzie entertained the audience with folk and bluegrass tunes until 7 p.m. The next Grange on the Green concert is this Thursday, 5:30-7 p.m.

Letters to the Editor

Encourage adoption of resolution supporting due

To the Editor:

Recent federal immigration enforcement actions have raised concerns about due process protections in our communities. Reports include detention without legal representation, use of detainees without sufficient evidence, and arrests without criminal charges. Additionally, incidents of criminals impersonating federal officials have created public safety concerns.

The city of Rutland responded to these concerns last April by unanimously passing “A Resolution Condemning Attacks on Due Process and Affirming the Constitutional Rights of All People in Rutland.” Since then, 15 other municipalities — Burlington, Wallingford, Rockingham-Bellows Falls, Brandon, Jericho, Pittsfield, Bennington, Shaftsbury, Pomfret, Middletown Springs, Rutland Town, Vergennes, East Montpelier, Manchester and Pownal — have adopted similar resolutions. Those resolutions are available at <https://tinyurl.com/mxuww6uyr>.

However, the elected officials of many Vermont municipalities have dismissed the idea of adopting such resolutions, often without even informing their constituents that these issues were brought to their attention. Common reasons include: viewing this effort as partisan politics rather than constitutional protection; believing the resolution is unnecessary since officials have already sworn to uphold constitutional rights; or fearing federal retaliation.

Respectfully, these concerns miss the point. First, constitutional protections are not partisan, they protect all Vermonters regardless of political affiliation. Second, the resolution asks local officials to publicly reaffirm their commitment to constitutional principles at a time when these principles are being challenged. Third, silence in the face of federal lawlessness has not protected Vermont.

Our communities deserve leaders that will uphold our constitutional rights, and Vermonters have a right to know where their local officials stand. I encourage you to contact your local board members and ask them to consider adopting a resolution for your municipality. Attend board meetings,

organize with neighbors and demand transparency about why your local officials support or oppose such measures.

Resolutions adopted by other municipalities can be adapted for yours. The time to act is now, before our constitutional protections erode further. Use your voice to protect your rights.

Peter G. Franzoni
Rutland

Jeep packed for adventure to whereabouts unknown

To the Editor:

In 1995, Susan Maguire married me and we built a house on Texas Hill Road. You welcomed us as we brought two boys into that home and allowed our roots to grow deep.

Our boys were growing into young men. We were living the dream.

Fast forward, the dreams are shattered. But there you were. With a warm meal. A banana bread. A coffee at Parkside. A hug or just a breath on the deck. You have been the hand reaching for Marc and me, in the darkness.

Thank you.
Now, it’s time for me to go quietly into the night. My Jeep is packed for an adventure to whereabouts unknown.

How could I leave the people who love me most? It’s time.

For, if I look for it, it won’t be found. But when I see it, I will know it.

Marc and I are OK. We have each other, and we are grateful for you.

Joe Hoepfner
Hinesburg

(Joe Hoepfner founded Project Hoepfner with his wife Sue Hoepfner after their 17-year-old son Paul died by suicide in 2018.)

Misrepresentations in PFAS legislation and pesticide safety

To the Editor:

In light of recent communications from Pam Bryer, toxicologist at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, regarding the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in pesticides, it is crucial to clarify the realities surrounding PFAS

legislation and the ongoing risks these chemicals pose to the environment and public health in Vermont.

On May 9, 2024, Act 131 (S.25) was passed by the Vermont legislature and signed into law by Governor Phil Scott on May 29, 2024. This act defines PFAS as a class of fluorinated organic chemicals containing at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom. However, misinformation continues to circulate regarding the regulation and safety of pesticides containing PFAS.

In an email to Dr. Lori Cragin, division director and state epidemiologist for the environmental health division at the Vermont Department of Health, dated May 23, 2024, Bryer made several claims regarding the potential presence of PFAS in pesticides within the Source Protection Area in Middlebury that warrant correction.

Below are several of Bryer’s claims, followed by factual clarifications:

Claim: “PFAS are not allowed in pesticides.”

Fact: The EPA continues to register PFAS-containing active ingredients. For example, Minnesota Department of Agriculture has identified 95 EPA-registered pesticide active ingredients as PFAS in use in Minnesota.

Claim: “Soil depth penetration studies are part of the required data collected by EPA for pesticide registration.”

Fact: These studies typically focus only on the active ingredient, ignoring adjuvants and so-called inert ingredients that may significantly influence leaching behavior, particularly in Vermont’s sandy soils and shallow groundwater zones.

Claim: “There are pesticides that are never found deeper than 5 cm down in the soil following an application because of the chemical’s soil-binding behaviors.”

Fact: Such generalizations are unsubstantiated. Soil composition, climate and formulation all influence chemical behavior. In Vermont groundwater PFAS contamination is real and well-documented. Many PFAS are highly water soluble and readily move through soil and water. This solubility and chemical persistence allows them to travel great distances from where they were applied.

Claim: “It is sometimes hard to know what the public means when they say ‘PFAS.’”

Fact: Vermont residents, including those of us in VTPAPAN and Middlebury Airport Neighbors Association (MANA) understand that PFAS vary widely but are still dangerous to life as a class of chemicals combining fluorine and carbon. We are well aware of PFAS sources and pathways—including pesticide formulations. This comment is dismissive of public understanding and concern.

Claim: “The EPA has clearly stated that the presence of PFAS (at the level of quantification) in any pesticide product is a violation of FIFRA.”

Fact: This claim lacks supporting documentation. The EPA continues to allow PFAS-based ingredients in registered products, contradicting Bryer’s assertion.

Claim: “What is confusing many people, however, is that some chemicals that have already undergone full regulatory review are now being called PFAS despite not sharing any of the same characteristics as those chemicals traditionally referred to as PFAS.”

Fact: Vermont law, like similar statutes in Maine and Minnesota, follows the OECD definition of PFAS, which includes a broad range of fluorinated organic compounds, many of which appear in pesticide ingredients.

In 2022, approximately 6,800 lbs. of pesticides containing PFAS were reported in use, highlighting the pressing need for transparency and action.

Pam Bryer’s denial of the presence of PFAS in pesticides not only misinforms the public but also contributes to the ongoing environmental and health crisis affecting Vermonters. Her refusal to acknowledge this reality undermines efforts to safeguard our health, particularly that of future generations. As a member of the Act 131 Working Group, her influence may have played a role in the decision to exclude pesticides from the consumer products banned by S.25.

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homeowners staple or tape the plastic over their windows to help retain heat.

But, this is a one-time-use solution, because when the weather warms up, the homeowners tear down the plastic and, hopefully, dispose of it in the recycling, Yantachka said. The custom inserts, that Sustainable Charlotte produces in partnership with Window Dressers, are removable, storable and useable again the next year.

“It’s targeted specifically toward helping Charlotte residents insulate their leaky windows,” Yantachka said. “We approached Sustainable Charlotte. They did not ask for a donation from us.”

The reason the committee approached Sustainable Charlotte was because they had a product that was better than anyone else’s, Yantachka said. The fact that it was a nonprofit didn’t influence the decision; the committee would have had the inserts built by

a private company, if its inserts were as good.

Mead said she brought the donation-expense conundrum to the selectboard’s attention “because there is a process for nonprofits requesting a donation, and it seemed that what the energy committee was giving is basically a donation to Sustainable Charlotte.”

She said the invoice submitted is not an invoice for any particular weatherization product but an invoice for a donation, and the town’s process for nonprofits to request donations takes place at budget time.

In a phone conversation, town administrator Nate Bareham said he didn’t think the invoice submitted could be considered a legitimate invoice because there were no goods or services itemized on it. There was no indication of how many, nor when, window inserts would be delivered nor how much each would cost.

After consideration, Kanner said, she thought Mead made a good point.

“Our committees shouldn’t be making

donations because, if the money for operating expenses aren’t necessary to operate that committee, then that money should go back to the taxpayers,” Kanner said.

Possibly, in the future, there could be a mechanism for making grants, Tenney said, but right now there isn’t any money in the budget for grants.

After much discussion, the conversation began to circle, and Krohn said he didn’t think anyone wanted to make a motion on whether or not the energy committee could make a donation to Sustainable Charlotte.

“If there’s no action taken at all, that would be the answer,” Krohn said. “I’m not sensing that there’s any enthusiasm to move forward on this.”

After no motion was forthcoming, he said, “Sadly but understandably, I will declare this matter not acted upon. It is with great appreciation for the purpose, intent and efforts that were intended, but the timing and circumstance just weren’t really quite right for this.”



NEXT PUBLICATION DATES

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LETTERS

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We urge Bryer to adhere to Vermont’s legal definition of PFAS, acknowledge the presence of these harmful substances in pesticides, and commit to the health and healing of Vermont’s environment from years of toxic land use. If she cannot align with these principles, we urge her to consider other employment opportunities.

We respectfully urge the Agency of Agriculture to take the following actions:

- 1. Publicly affirm Vermont’s legal definition of PFAS and acknowledge the presence of these substances in pesticide products.
- 2. Commit to transparent communication and science-based regulatory enforcement.
- 3. Reassess the appropriateness of Bryer’s continued involvement in PFAS policy development, should she be unwilling to align with the law and public health priorities.

Sylvia Knight
Burlington

Are solar panels Vermont’s new sacred cow?

To the Editor:

What does Vermont mean to you?
If farms, forests and stewardship come to mind, please read on
In 1925, Vermont had over 3.3 million acres of agricultural land. Fast forward

to 2022 and this number has dwindled to 543,096 acres.
Many factors have led to declines in agricultural land over the years but a recent contributor to this alarming trend is industrial-scale solar development which brings ecological devastation and threatens food security. Steep reductions in agricultural land, specifically due to industrial solar, are happening nationwide with several states such as Oregon, Pennsylvania and New Jersey passing laws and crafting legislation to protect agricultural land.
Out-of-state commodities investors, global corporations and renewable energy developers are purchasing and leasing land in Vermont because it is comparatively cheap and subsidies and tax incentives for renewable energy development exist as well as high market rates for the ownership of this ‘renewable energy’. Nearly all large solar projects developed by “Vermont solar developers” are sold to out-of-state hedge funds and investment banks after permitting or construction. This situation is creating the perfect storm for Vermonters and our cherished environment to be preyed upon while wealthy renewable energy developers and investors reap the benefits
Vermont is poised to become an industrial solar plantation with developers selling high value renewable energy power and renewable energy credits to the highest bidders. The power does not have to be

used or stay in Vermont and other states can buy this power or the renewable energy credits and claim they have met their state’s “renewable energy mandates.” Corporations can also purchase these renewable energy credits to claim they are a “green” company, which then boosts their environmental-social governance rating and attracts investors.
Keep in mind, there is no energy transition happening. With the massive expansion and implementation of artificial intelligence and the internet of things in all sectors, energy consumption will continue to increase exponentially. Governments, healthcare, education, industry, Hollywood, sports teams and individual use of AI all contribute to this unfathomable growth and its unimaginable power and data storage demands. These technologies consume land, water and energy at rates never witnessed before. People have been sold a lie when it comes to the ‘energy transition’.
The days of reduced consumption are long gone. Striving for continued efficiency remains a worthy goal, yet industrial scale solar power, in our often cloudy Vermont, when sited in the wrong place, is inefficient, unreliable and destructive to entire ecosystems and food security.
It all sounds hypocritical because it is. How do Vermonters feel about this?
On June 3, I visited a proposed industrial solar site in Fair Haven. This project would cover 110 acres — yes, 110 acres — of absolutely beautiful, high quality agricultural land. This project is under review at the Public Utility Commission.
It was heartbreaking to walk this land and picture it with the topsoil ripped off and the earth heavily compacted and covered with industrial solar panels, causing erosion and permanently compromising the health of this farmland. Especially given the fact that taxpayers are subsidizing this development — a form of corporate welfare — the power purchase agreement does not have to be established prior to approval; Vermont does not hold any guarantee of the power; Vermonters may be on the hook for higher electricity rates and increased transmission and distribution costs; developers are positioned to rake in unimaginable revenue; and the permanent loss of Vermont’s agricultural land is guaranteed.
This is clearly a lose-lose situation for Vermont. Sadly, this Fair Haven project is only one of several industrial-scale solar projects proposed at this time by the Connecticut-based commodities trading company — Freepoint Commodities, a/k/a VT Real Estate Holdings. In Shaftsbury, Freepoint Commodities has also applied to the Public Utility Commission for a 20MW solar project which has drawn significant opposition from the surrounding landowners and communities. The Shaftsbury project would cover 80 acres of prime agricultural

land and rolling hillsides. This project includes 45 acres of deforestation with documented compromise to ecosystems and native species. There is also discussion of Freepoint’s 50MW industrial solar project proposal in Panton, which would host a 300-acre industrial solar plantation on mostly agricultural land
For years, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets has been educating legislators at the State House about the alarming loss of prime agricultural land. The Democratic leadership has taken zero action to protect prime agricultural land and prevent Vermont from this predatory behavior by well-funded, lawyer-heavy renewable energy developers.
The controversial Renewable Energy Standard was passed last session by the supermajority, despite the governor’s veto. This Renewable Energy Standard mandates aggressive requirements for renewable energy in Vermont yet fails to address these unresolved issues of siting and project placement, appropriate industrial solar regulations, expensive distribution and transmission costs, ratepayer protections and the unreliable nature of renewable energy, especially in Vermont.
Special interests such as Renewable Energy Vermont, a well-funded trade group representing renewable energy developers, designed this legislation and lobbied hard for the Renewable Energy Standard. Democratic leadership further overlooked significant details such as property and education tax rates for renewable energy projects that benefit investment banks and hedge funds.
Grassroots environmental groups such as Vermonters for a Clean Environment, as well as the Department of Public Service, attempted to address these deficiencies and were ignored. Vermonters for a Clean Environment has continually advocated for the proper siting of renewable energy projects. Annette Smith, executive director, has regularly shared information and reports encouraging solar development on the built environment, meaning parking lots, buildings, homes, landfills, brownfields, in order to protect Vermont’s deeply cherished ecosystems, forest and agricultural lands.
Representative Rob North (R-Addison-3) introduced a recent bill to repeal the Renewable Energy Standard due to the risks of intermittent renewable energy and the heavily increased costs to Vermont ratepayers. Governor Scott’s administration has also offered a bill to amend the Renewable Energy Standard in an attempt to address the gaps that place Vermonters and our environment at risk.

Alison Despathy
Danville
(Alison Despathy is a member of the board of Vermonters for a Clean Environment.)

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Around Town

Condolences

Kristine Sheathelm Gerson passed away peacefully in her home on June 23, 2025. Her death followed a long period of enduring a brutal lymphoma. She remains a beautiful young woman in the eyes of her loving family and wonderful friends.



Kristine was born in Colorado Springs, Colo., on January 26, 1957, growing up in Lansing, Mich., and Storrs, Conn. It was in Storrs that she met and fell in love with her husband, Bill. She graduated with degrees in education from Wheelock College and Johns Hopkins University.

Teaching was her professional passion. She taught in Rockville, Md., and in the Baltimore Public Schools until she had her first child, Zachary, and the new family moved to Boston. She spent six years in Boston where the family added two more sons, Jacob and Elijah, while Kristine also ran a home daycare.

The family moved to Charlotte, Vt., in 1988, when Bill joined Pediatric Medicine in South Burlington. Their fourth son, Abraham, was born soon after the move. Kristine continued to provide home

daycare in Charlotte, taught at the religious school at Temple Sinai in South Burlington and gave back to her local community by founding, along with her friend Marty Ditchey, the Charlotte Food Shelf, for which she was later honored as Volunteer of the Year by the town.

Kristine went on to teach first and second grades at Charlotte Central School for 20 years until her illness and the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated her early retirement. While she excelled as a teacher, her family and community of friends defined her — the love, travel and just the fun of it all. Married for almost 50 years, her loving family — husband, four sons, four daughters-in-law and six grandchildren, parents, brother, brother and sister-in-law, nieces and nephews — was a constant joy. They are all heartbroken by their loss.

Kristine was an individual of great beauty, humor, strength, compassion and a deep commitment to caring. She was an avid knitter and reader, particularly as her illness became more limiting when she would produce treasure troves of knitting creations and read hundreds of books each year. She was dedicated to nature and will be missed by the wide variety of birds that daily visited her yard at home, bringing Kristine and whoever was visiting happiness at the most difficult of times.

Her family and friends will profoundly feel her enduring legacy. Instead of flowers, her family asks that contributions be made in her name to the Charlotte Library and the National Audubon Society.

She is survived by her husband Bill; her sons Zachary Gerson and his wife Kristin (Ducrest) and their three children, Eloise, Samuel and Lilly of Wynnewood, Penn.; Jacob Gerson and his wife Maria Gabriela Morgade Yllera of Valladolid, Spain and their son Manuel Gerson Morgade; Elijah and his wife Sara Johnson-Cardona and their children Louis and Santiago, of St. Louis, Mo.; and Abraham Gerson and his wife Alicia (Lorre) of Avignon, France.

Congratulations

Jakob Holm of Charlotte graduated with distinction with his bachelor of science in biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural & Life Science in May.

Griffin Veltkamp of Charlotte was named to the dean's list at the University of Tampa for the spring semester as a

freshman majoring in entrepreneurship.

Advancements

Wake Robin hires new director of human resources

Wake Robin has hired **Karen Vincent** as director of human resources.

Most recently, Vincent was the senior talent acquisition consultant at National Life Group. Prior to that, she worked for more than 20 years at the University of Vermont Medical Center.



"It is hard for me to think of a more meaningful opportunity than supporting Wake Robin employees so that they can support our residents," Vincent said.

Wake Robin, a Life Plan Community, also welcomes **Barbara Arel, Sarah Cocina** and **Sarah Merritt** as new members of the board of directors.

Town officials pleased about hiring of new employees

Scooter MacMillan
Editor

At the selectboard meeting on July 14, chair Lee Krohn took an opportunity to note his pleasure about the town having a few new employees.

On that Monday, a new recreation director, Gary Roberts, had started his first official day of work.

Town administrator Nate Bareham said he had met with Roberts the day before and they had toured several town facilities, including the town beach.

"It's good to have Gary Roberts on board. I'm looking forward to working with him in the future," Bareham said.

Charlotte also has a new town planner, Lindsay Kahn, who will start work on Aug. 4.

Zoning administrator Aaron Brown has stepped down. The need to replace him has become less urgent timewise because Rebecca Kaplan, the current planning and zoning assistant, has offered to step in as interim zoning administrator for up to six months while the search is on for a full-time person.

Also, across the street at the Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, business manager Patrice Machavern is stepping away from that job, and her replacement has been hired. There will be some overlap for the new business manager to get up to speed before Machavern's last day.

"There's a lot of amazing activity on the hiring front for the town," Krohn said. "We're very fortunate for our small town to bring some real expertise to the table."

Sewer fee schedule approved

At the meeting, the board also unanimously approved a fee schedule for the cost of hooking up to the wastewater system in the west village.

The board determined that because the system has extra capacity not being used by town buildings and because encouraging business development in the two town villages is a goal, that businesses in the vicinity could be approved for hooking up to the system.

For two years, the selectboard has been discussing how the town should charge for this service. During that time, Stone's Throw Pizza has been getting service but hasn't been charged for it.

Now there are plans for Mike Dunbar and a proposed development called Charlotte Village Partners to hook up. The plan is to put in some office space and possibly some housing units on property behind the town hall, Bareham said.

Settling on a fee schedule has taken a while because it was one of many things, and a particularly complicated one, that had to be dealt with after the retirement of Dean Bloch as town administrator.

The previous and the current board have had several conversations about how to charge for using the town sewage system. One of the decisions was whether to charge for how much of the system was used or to charge for the capacity of use that a building was approved for. Ultimately, the selectboard decided to base the fee schedule upon a business' approved capacity.

Beaver gawking



Photo by Lee Krohn

Photographer and selectboard chair Lee Krohn had a stare down with a beaver just as it emerged from a swim.

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New cottage food law keeps VT products in home kitchens

Kate Kampner
Community News Service

Peter Hopkins and his business partners were having a great year in sales for their food start up. They sold mustard, snack mixes and kimchi right out of their kitchen in Pownal.

But then they had to step out of their local holiday festival because their business, Hoppy Valley, along with many other cottage food producers, was only allowed to make \$10,000 annually before they were required to get licensing and inspections from the state’s health department.

Cottage foods are products that don’t require refrigeration, temperature or time control. They include jams and jellies, candy, granola, popcorn and home-canned pickled vegetables or fruits made with state-approved recipes. A cottage food operator is someone who produces these products on their personal property.

“Food entrepreneurship is a cherished, centuries-old tradition in Vermont,” said Hopkins, who has spent years making meals for family, friends and community members. “We’re trusted and encouraged to do so for our communities but are not trusted or encouraged to sell food from these same kitchens.”

He wanted to expand his earnings, so he reached out to his local representatives.

Prior to the 2025 legislative session, Rep. Jim Carroll, D-Bennington, proposed to update the cottage food threshold for sales to \$50,000, but the bill never budged.

But in February, Rep. Jonathan Cooper, D-Pownal, joined 35 co-sponsors in H.401, which asked the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry to raise the bar to \$30,000.

This threshold will allow for the cottage food products that are not generally associated with food-borne illnesses more latitude in the marketplace, said Abbey Willard, the agriculture division director of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

On July 1, local producers like Hopkins celebrated as that bill became Act 42, which brought together both cottage food operators and home bakeries, which previously had a separate threshold of \$6,250.

Hopkins said the changes in the law will make a significant contribution to the incomes of many small businesses.

“For those who are little guys like me, this allows them to pursue their livelihood without as much apprehension,” Hopkins said.

A 2022 ranking from the Institute of Justice, a non-profit public interest law firm, graded 70 different homemade food programs across 50 states. Vermont scored low, with a D+ for Home Bakeries and a C for Home Processors.

“That pulled hard at some of my Green Mountain heartstrings,” Hopkins said in response to the ranking. His representative, Cooper, called Act 42 a food resiliency bill.

Prior to its passage, “Vermont had one of the most restrictive small-scale production laws in the country,” Cooper said.

Willard said giving food producers more room before they hit the \$30,000 ceiling could



File photo by Catherine Morrissey
The Plainfield Co-op that sells local Vermont products.

allow them more opportunities to experiment with products and recipes.

“We want food manufacturers to be successful, we want them to use local ingredients, we want this to help farmers and we want this to help food businesses,” Willard said. “We want consumers to be able to buy Vermont products first.”

During testimony on H.401, the Department of Health shared some common violations they saw during home bakery inspections, like a failure to maintain product temperatures, toilet and handwashing issues and violations regarding thermometers or chemical test kits.

The new bill now requires all cottage food producers to take a free online training and file for a cottage food exemption, found through the Department of Health’s website.

“We think that the law is striking the balance between supporting these cottage food producers and manufacturers while also protecting public health,” said Meg McCarthy, the Department of Health’s Compliance and Enforcement Advisor in the Environmental

Health Division.
“I like to do things by the rules,” Hopkins said. “Tell us how to do it and we’ll do it for sure.”

Caroline Sherman-Gordon, a lobbyist for Rural Vermont, a farmer advocacy group, said the bill was a good compromise between state regulations and cottage food producers, while expanding access to the state’s food system.

“Many people want to engage in the food system even if they don’t have a farm by becoming a food manufacturer,” Sherman-Gordon said.

Throughout the session, as the bill was negotiated and altered, the one thing Hopkins kept in mind was making sure that it was representative of Vermont food producers.

“Let’s make this something that is singular for Vermont, worthwhile for Vermont and helps quality of life for Vermonters,” Hopkins said.

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

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CAMPAIGN

Continued from page 1

- Distributed 52 eNews issues to 1,089 subscribers;
- Recorded 200,000 page views on our website (27 percent annual increase); and
- Provided 1,712 downloads of the digital newspaper via the website.

Here are some highlights of our community efforts in action. Last year we:

- Were supported by the talents and generosity of 150 volunteers — writers, photographers, delivery drivers, proofreaders, board and committee members;
- Partnered with Charlotte Central School. To date, we’ve featured stories by 18 different students, ages 10-13;
- Partnered with the University of Vermont’s Community News Service, publishing the work of 23 college students to date;
- Partnered with 74 advertisers, including many locally owned businesses and nonprofits serving our community; and



- Featured countless community members in coverage throughout the year.

Now is your chance to support the community of Charlotte in a way that benefits everyone. You can give online at charlottenewsvt.org/donate or mail a gift to us at: The Charlotte News, P.O. Box 251, Charlotte, VT 05445.

Thank you so much.

(Andrew Zehner is the chair of the board of directors of The Charlotte News.)

How & why Vermont herds geese every year at Dead Creek

Maeve Fairfax
Community News Service

A circle of volunteers appeared from the brush beside a field and slowly converged on a gaggle of Canada geese. They herded them into an enclosure, and the few birds that escaped the roundup were retrieved one by one.

Canada geese molt their flying feathers in the summer, grounding them for a few weeks. That provides a window for state scientists and volunteers, like those at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area recently keeping tabs on the birds.

During the season, the state tries to secure identifier bands on 1 percent of the nesting population of Canada geese, or 300-400 birds, the minimum experts say they need to estimate the population overall.

State officials have hosted a goose-banding day every year at the wildlife area since the 1960s, said biologist Andrew Bouton, who leads the Department of Fish and Wildlife’s migratory game bird efforts.

Data from the event is used to track the nesting population, sex ratios, how many juveniles survive to adulthood and details on birds killed by hunters, he said.

The volunteers who turned out July 2 for this year’s edition were an eclectic group, wearing everything from head-to-toe camouflage to tie-dyed tank tops and jean shorts.

“I know some of the folks here were hunters,” said David Sausville, who runs wildlife management for the department. “I know a lot of them are families with young kids trying to expose them to it, and then there’s folks that I know that are just straight conservationists, too, that enjoy being out in the land.”

The band is “basically a bracelet,” Bouton said. They aren’t fitted with any electronic trackers, but each has a unique number. Hunters who kill a goose with a band can report the number to a federal database.

Officials can learn a lot about a goose from its number: when it was banded, how old it was then, if it was recaptured and, as Agency of Natural Resources Secretary Julie Moore said, “a little bit of travel history.”

The July 2 banding spanned two sites.

The 60 or 70 volunteers split into groups and approached the first of what the biologists called the “goose roundup fields” from all sides. Some geese were on a pond nearby, so volunteers in a canoe flushed them out of the water and into the field. The others, already in position on land, herded them into a pen set up earlier.

The sun was hot and a lot of volunteers left early, so it was a smaller group that approached the second site. Carrying portable fencing, they formed a ring just outside the field and, after encircling the geese and guiding them into the right position, constructed a pen around the birds.

They set up a shade tent, and biologists poured water on the geese to calm and cool them, Bouton said.

The geese proved difficult to handle — later, one even escaped from someone’s hold and sprinted away honking.

After the geese were corralled, volunteers carried them to another tent, where experienced banders recorded the sex of each bird and affixed a metal band to their leg with pliers. After all the birds were banded, they were released into the field.

The final tally for the day was 73 new birds and 17 recaptured ones, average numbers for the event, Sausville said.

Vermont Fish and Wildlife keeps a close eye on the state’s Canada geese because the population is young — and exists largely because of human intervention. Dead Creek Visitor Center manager Amy Alfieri said the nesting population, including the birds banded at this year’s event, descends from geese in a decades-old program at Dead Creek.

In 1956, the state trapped 44 Canada geese, clipped their wings, then released them into a 70-acre enclosed area around the creek. By 1960, they were nesting. Canada geese have strong homing instincts and usually return to the place they were born to raise young. Now around 300 goslings are born in the Dead Creek area each year.

Once the nesting population was established, more migrating geese started to stop by Dead Creek. Between 2,000 and 5,000 migratory Canada geese come to the area each fall, according to the state.

And it is no accident. “The area was designed as basically a waterfowl



Volunteers corraling geese into a pen.

Photos by Maeve Fairfax

management production area,” Sausville said. In the 1950s, dams were built with mechanisms to control water levels and used to create open water and wetland habitats.

At the time, a lot of Vermont’s wildlife was threatened, and there was a push to re-forest the land and bring birds, particularly game species, back in.

Much of the work at Dead Creek was done by World War II veterans, who had developed

engineering and construction skills in the military or studied conservation on the GI bill, said Sausville.

“This is the original wetland creation story in Vermont,” Moore said.

Water levels in the area are periodically lowered to expose mudflats and allow plants

GEESE continued on page 8



A volunteer at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area on July 2 carrying a Canada goose.

PROPERTY
TANSFERS
April-May 2025

April

April 3 125 Lake LLC to John H. & Katie F. Bowman 125 Lake Road Lot #1 29.88 acres with dwelling \$489,900

May

May 6 David G.& Nina D. Hill to Benjamin & Nicole Green 416 Higbee Rd. 15.60 acres with dwelling \$853.630.02

May 6 Brian & Kimberly Forbes to Darrell & Dana Kling 335 Upper Meadow Lane 2.43 acres with dwelling \$1,275,000.

May 13 Sterling Home Properties LLC to Joelle & Brett Buzby 85 Old Higbee Rd. 3.41 acres with dwelling \$980,531.83

May 13 Charlene Rutter Barrie to Camp Odelay LLC 357 Association Way seasonal cottage \$1,550,000

May 13 Rogan Family Revocable Trust to Claire J. Babilonia & Jesse A Kane 170 Wexford Lane 5.10 acres with dwelling \$1,330,100

May 15 Lindsey Marie Farrar to Justin & Gerry Lee 1430 Ethan Allen Highway 6.4 acres with dwelling \$635,000

May 15 Caitlin Calderon & Jesus Batioja to Lindsey Farrar 289 Whalley Road 4.63 acres with dwelling \$625,000

May 22 Roland & Lisa Gaujac to SBP Hospitality Group LLC 3260 Greenbush Rd. 6.23 acres Barn Lot \$1,375,000

May 30 Chea Waters Evans to Samuel & Kyley Pollitt 16 181 Windswept Lane 16.03 acres with dwelling \$1,151,400

June

June 2 Neil J Tremblay to Kevin Williams & Jacqueline Waterman Williams 251 Tamarack Rd. 36.45 acres open land \$1,000,000

June 2 Debra Korejwa to David Gelwin 590 Dorset Street with dwelling 10.15 acres \$910,000

June 2 499 Popple Dungeon Rd. LLC to Melissa & Joseph Caliguri 499 Popple Dungeon Rd.with dwelling 11.30 acres \$2,200,000

June 5 Peter S. & Susanna L Kahn to Kathleen L. Palmer Revocable Trust 250 Palmer Lane with dwelling 6.25 acres \$1,525,000

June 5 Chea Waters Evans to James Donovan & Patricia O'Donnell 181 Windswept Lane 28.72 acres \$116,000

June 11 Elizabeth Kearns & Edward LeBlanc to Bill S. & Chelsea I. Majdalany 1249 Church Hill Rd.5.15 acres with dwelling Jun \$1,775,000

June 13 Sara Jane Crow to Skylar J. Kelley & Lauren R. Carpenter 11 Common Way .06 acres with dwelling \$439,000

This information was supplied by Jay Strausser of Four Seasons Sothebys International Real Estate.



Fighting knotweed by letting goats pig out

Lindsey Papasian
Community News Service

For the past seven years, volunteers have been pulling and clipping Japanese knotweed from riverbanks, open fields, roadsides and plenty of places in between.

They're part of a joint effort between conservation commissions in three towns — Waitsfield, Warren and Fayston — to fight the invasive plant, which has taken hold along the Mad River Valley.

More recently, project leaders have enlisted a helping hoof: goats that can eat the knotweed up.

Goat grazing is a known method to control invasive plants without machinery. Goats feed on the plants, weakening or killing them entirely. In 2024, the Mad River Valley effort hired Mary Beth Herbert to do the job. This year, she's funded by a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

According to Curt Lindberg, chair of the Waitsfield Conservation Commission, the project spans a cumulative 260 worksites across the region. Interns from the University of Vermont, as well as local volunteers, have been working, along with the goats, to control knotweed across the locations.

Herbert got her start with keeping goats in 2018 while working as a trail crew leader on the Appalachian Trail in southern Vermont. She got interested in working with goats because of frequent machine



Photos by Lindsey Papasian

Mid-snack, a goat pauses to assess an approaching camera.

failures on the job that set the crew behind.

She spent around five years camping on the trail with her goats, half the time as a volunteer, the other half paid.

In the same year she and her three goats — Ruth, Bader and Ginsberg, after the former U.S. Supreme Court justice — were hired by the city of Montpelier to remove poison ivy.

In the winter of 2023, Herbert gave

away her then 23-strong herd and moved to Arizona to study with Navajo shepherds.

That spring, she was contacted by the Mad River knotweed operation to help rid the area of the invasive.

When efforts to remove knotweed first started out, locals found it challenging and had thought, “‘Why even bother,’” said

GOATS continued on page 9

GEESE

Continued from page 7

to grow. The areas are flooded again, and the plants provide a food source for waterfowl, said Alfieri.

Some fields in the management area are leased to farmers who grow food like corn and alfalfa, which help attract waterfowl, she said.

The state's target nesting population of Canada geese is 24-25,000 birds, Sausville said.

That number is based on what the environment can handle but also on what he called Vermont's “cultural carrying capacity,” or how many geese humans are willing to coexist with.

“I’m sure that the biological carrying capacity is actually higher than that, and the landscape could hold more of them,” he said.

Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area is about 3,000 acres, and 400 of those serve as a refuge, meaning no hunting is allowed and no one can go inside. But there are five hunting blinds in other parts of the area that allow hunting on a limited basis.

Controlled hunting has been allowed in Dead Creek since 1974. Permits are available through a lottery for several days in October and November. Limits for how many geese can be shot per day are announced each year.

“We’ve been consistently right around 7,000 waterfowl hunters statewide for many years,” Sausville said.

Doug Smith of Addison, who came to the July 2 event, is one of them. He has been hunting in Vermont since the 1970s, both within and outside of the Dead Creek area. He said he’s been a regular at the event over the years. Many of the state workers there seemed



Wildlife biologist and Dead Creek Visitor Center manager Amy Alfieri clamps a band on a Canada goose.

to know him.

“The trouble is, if you hunt the same area quite often, the geese aren’t going to go there anymore,” he said, explaining his strategy of rotating to different hunting spots. “They’re not dumb.”

Part of the state's continued focus on the Dead Creek area is due to its role within the Lake Champlain flyway, Moore said. That's a section of the larger Atlantic Flyway, the path most birds take when migrating along the East Coast. Moore said her agency has used money from the Environmental Protection Agency to

buy poor farmland and convert it to wetland habitat for migratory birds.

The end goal, she said, is creating a connected block of protected habitat in the Otter Creek watershed, of which Dead Creek is a part.

“Projects that are at the intersection of some of our water quality goals for Lake Champlain and create habitat is this serendipitous win-win,” Moore said.

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

GOATS

Continued from page 8

Lindberg.

But in the past few years there has been a shift in perspective.

“With good persistent effort, you can make progress,” Lindberg said.

The knotweed is extensive and dense, especially along the river.

On a recent day near the Mad River Exchange in Waitsfield, Herbert walked along a wooded trail toward the riverside clearing where her crew has been stationed this summer. Unlike the land around it, the field hasn’t been overwhelmed by knotweed; the patches are shorter and more spread out.

She’s been rotating her herd of 18 goats around the perimeter to prevent the invasive from growing any further.

“I already see a difference from last year to this year,” she said.

Around the field, knotweed grazed on four weeks ago had grown back to chest height, while further away, ungrazed plants stood at least 6 feet high.

Unlike poison ivy, which can be grazed heavily one time, Knotweed needs more regular maintenance to suppress the spread.

“Knotweed needs to be grazed many, many times, over and over,” Herbert said.

Increased flooding in Vermont is worrisome to both her and Linberg for how

it could fuel the spread of the invasive.

That’s because when floodwaters pass over riverbanks with a population of Japanese knotweed, they can carry rhizomes — the part of the plant that grows new roots and shoots — downstream, where the invasives can replant themselves into the soil and spread the network further.

The field where Herbert is working is public land that could turn entirely into knotweed if left unmanaged.

“The goal is to work where people used to go and can’t anymore because of the knotweed and reclaim” those spots, Herbert said.

The goats will be spending all summer eating knotweed around the field. They are moved every two or three days from one spot to another and cycle to previously grazed spots around every four weeks.

On that recent afternoon, goats followed Herbert around as she kicked knotweed down to make it easier for them to reach.

“I’m happy because the goats absolutely love the knotweed,” Herbert said.

She sees animal husbandry as the most important part of her job. She trims the goats’ hooves, makes sure they get enough nutrition in their diet and sets up electric fences every time they are moved to keep them from wandering away or encountering coyotes.

Each year the knotweed is getting weaker in places the volunteers are working,



Mary Beth Herbert works with her crew of goats clearing knotweed near the Mad River in Waitsfield.

Lindberg said. In some roadside spots, where the weed can’t spread as easily as by water, volunteers have eradicated the plant, he said.

Interns and volunteers are set to fight the knotweed into September. In October,

volunteers will plant native plants.

“The goal is to restore healthy, native habitat,” Lindberg said.

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)



A goat stretches up to eat leaves from a Japanese knotweed plant near the Mad River in Waitsfield.

Commentary

A national avalanche of dying medical principles

Bill Schubart
Contributor

In the run-up to President Trump's budget submission, some 28 Freedom Caucus members and other conservative hardliners vociferously opposed it, on camera, for their constituents. Then, under personal pressure from President Trump, they all caved and voted for the bill.

So much for principles. Does their final vote reflect the best interests of those who voted for them? "Just politics," some might say, but this is a bill that undermines the lives and livelihoods of some 37 million Americans and further limits their ability to meet basic needs.

Many of those who voted for Trump's budget are evangelical Christians, believing God chose Trump to lead this nation and might even buy his personally autographed \$1,000 Bible. In my own Christian upbringing, we learned of a different Christ, one who reached out and helped the hungry, the poor, the weak, the lame, the homeless, the sick, urged followers to visit those in prison and taught us to "do unto others as you would be done by." A sad and cruel hypocrisy.

Meanwhile here at home in Vermont, the appointed board of the University of Vermont Health Network, which is morally and legally accountable for implementing high-quality, accessible, affordable healthcare in the institution it governs, appears unable or unwilling to address persistent failures in all three basic measures of a successful healthcare system. Has Dr. Sunil Eappen, the president of the system they govern, so cowed his board of trustees that they're unable to fulfill their legal obligation to hold his administration accountable? Does he appoint like-minded trustees himself or is his board a truly self-perpetuating board, as is best practice?

How is it that our established systems of governance are failing in both Washington and Vermont? Have unchecked leaders eclipsed our commitment to the common good?

Here are some open questions for the University of Vermont Health Network and the University of Vermont Medical Center Boards:



Adobe Stock image

1. Given Eappen's recent decision to consolidate all leadership power within the University of Vermont Health Network's hospitals under his direct control, essentially leaving the individual hospital presidents with no employees or authority to lead, did you approve this decision? Dr. Leffler, the now largely titular president of Vermont's largest hospital — the University of Vermont Medical Center — is left with one employee.

2. What exactly is the University of Vermont Health Network? It's not a hospital, but rather a monopolistic aggregator of healthcare businesses that only adds to healthcare costs for Vermonters and the few companies left who insure them.

3. Is your unspoken goal to prepare the University of Vermont Health Network for sale to private equity, replacing the "common good" goal with profits? Oregon has made such sales of nonprofit healthcare entities to private equity illegal. Vermont's Legislative Legal Counsel is developing statutory language to do the same in Vermont. If the Legislature doesn't pass this statute, could we at least mandate that private equity-managed "nonprofit" healthcare in Vermont be regulated by the Green Mountain Care Board?

4. Why do the financial and quality figures published by Vermont Health Care 911 (on whose board I serve) that come directly from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the National Academy for State Healthcare Policy differ from those

promulgated by the University of Vermont Health Network leadership and submitted to the Green Mountain Care Board? Why did Eappen hire international consulting firm Forvis/Mazars to render an opinion on the accuracy and relevance of broadly accepted national data used by the Green Mountain Care Board? Do you know if University of Vermont Health Network itself is submitting accurate financial and performance data to its regulator as required? When I chaired Fletcher-Allen Healthcare some 20 years ago, its president was remanded to serve a two-year sentence in federal prison for providing false information to the hospital's then regulatory body. Is the current board overseeing the accurate provision of regulatory data to the Green Mountain Care board?

5. By law, in order for a hospital to receive a "certificate of need" to operate in Vermont, it must be nonprofit and subject to nonprofit governance. Is it time for the Green Mountain Care Board to review the cons of Vermont's hospitals to ensure that their governing boards are conforming to the legal standards of nonprofit governance?

6. Given the crushing costs and the measurable quality decline for Vermonters and the recent power grab by Eappen, isn't it time for you (the University of Vermont Health Network board of trustees) to initiate an interim performance review of him, with an eye towards holding him accountable for delivery on mission. If not now, when?

If the above is somewhat difficult to understand, Vermonters might simply ask board members why Vermont has:

- the fastest rising healthcare prices in the country?
- among the highest healthcare premiums in the country?
- according to the National Academy for State Health Policy, in 2024 the University of Vermont Medical Center earned \$802 million in net profit from commercial insurers?
- among the highest pharmaceutical markups in the country?
- the sixth highest proportion of patients with medical debt in the country, as documented by the Kaiser Family Foundation on medical debt in the U.S.?
- the University of Vermont Medical Center's Medicare Star Rating dropped from five stars to four stars in July 2024, attributable to declining quality and safety at the hospital, including issues with excess readmissions and hospital-acquired

infections, and Medicare cited the University of Vermont Medical Center for a decline in quality of care and imposed federal financial penalties as a result?

- after reporting a \$159-million profit in fiscal year 2024 and being directed by the Green Mountain Care board to reduce charges, Eappen chose to cut clinical services instead of management and administrative salaries, including his own, when the ratio of clinical to management and administration expenses in his \$1.9 billion budget are among the highest in the nation?

- the public record is rife with countless patient complaints of their inability to schedule appointments in a timely manner?

- regulatory compliance has been inadequate over several years as reported by the Green Mountain Care Board?

- the abuse of University of Vermont Health Network and University of Vermont Medical Center "community benefit" reporting as required in Vermont's Payment in Lieu of Taxes program to avoid property taxes?

In spite of spending \$158,696 on marketing and \$11 million in lobbying and advocacy to convince Vermonters, legislators and business leaders of their success, Vermonters know from personal experience that current levels of cost and access are unacceptable.

Something is seriously wrong and Vermonters are not dumb. Eappen's passive-aggressive decision to further erode employee morale and trust by consolidating power represents a gross failure of leadership and dereliction of duty. It also indicates a serious failure of board governance which ignores consistent mission failure while focusing on their bond rating.

Intrinsic board conflict is another issue, as several highly compensated employees serve on the board. Eappen himself sits on the boards of all the University of Vermont Health Network hospitals and entities it owns.

The courts and Congress in Washington, along with governing boards here in Vermont, have surrendered oversight of unchecked power and are silent when their role is most needed, not because the facts are unclear, but because standing up to power may risk political, monetary or reputational loss.

Just as political leaders invoke "faith" while abandoning the vulnerable, so, too, do healthcare leaders speak of mission while extracting wealth from the communities they claim to serve, camouflaging profits, closing services, all of which drain resources from education, housing and other urgent needs while delivering bonuses to executives. How does this benefit the community?

Just as we need the courts and Congress to stand up to the excesses of our current president, we need the governing boards of the University of Vermont Health Network and University of Vermont Medical Center to do their job and rein in the financial excesses of a system that poorly serves Vermonters, despite the personal and professional commitment of the countless medical and technical healthcare professionals who care for us every day. We honor them, if not their leaders.

(Bill Schubart is the former Chair of Fletcher Allen Healthcare and an adviser to The Charlotte News.)

Sports

How the Lake Monsters kept swimming



Photo by Eliot Barrengos

The Vermont Lake Monsters at bat during a June 8 game against the Westfield Starfires in Burlington.

Eliot Barrengos
Community News Service

The line for entry at Centennial Field nearly stretches to Colchester Avenue; more than 30 minutes before first pitch, parking spots have evaporated. The smell of sunscreen lingers, kids buzz with the freedom of their outdoor voices and chatter bleeds into the sounds of the ballpark.

Sweaty and patient, they’re all there to catch the Vermont Lake Monsters.

“Hotdog Hysteria” nights like this, on the first night of July, are one of a long list of promotions designed to drive crowds and keep them coming back, even on nights when the franks are the usual \$4. Tonight, they’re just 25 cents, and predictably, the concession line snakes across the park to the bullpen on the other side.

From June to August, if the crowds are any indication, the Lake Monsters have made themselves a must-see event.

Just a few years ago, the future of baseball in Burlington was far from certain. In 2020, Major League Baseball shrunk its minor league circuit, and teams like the Lake Monsters were left on the outside looking in.

Those changes put a long history in peril: Between 1994 and 2020, the Lake Monsters boasted 132 Major League alumni. The team’s park, leased from the University of Vermont in the summer, was built in 1906 and is one of the oldest in the country. Over the course of 119 years, it hosted multiple Hall of Famers as they made their way to the big leagues.

That’s when Chris English stepped to the plate. A native of Montreal, English led the Nos Amours Baseball Club group that purchased the Lake Monsters in March 2021. With no MLB club providing

players, the front office needed to find ways to build a roster — and swiftly.

One of English’s first calls was to former general manager C.J. Knudsen.

English called once, then again, Knudsen said, with the former manager rebuffing the idea of rejoining the team.

“Then he called me a third time,” Knudsen said, and the two came to an agreement: Knudsen would come back.

“We had no players,” he said. “It was basically myself, Chris and Morgan Brown, who’s our director of baseball operations, and we were able to rebuild the franchise and rebuild the roster.”

The franchise’s reinvention as part of a summer league for college players began that first summer in 2021.

“We had 67 different players play for us, 11 Vermonters, and somehow we were able to put together an amazing win streak,” Knudsen said.

A championship trophy in the team’s inaugural 2021 season in the Futures Collegiate League followed.

In affiliated minor league baseball, the Major League club has complete control of the coaches and players on the field for its smaller counterpart.

As an amateur team, the Lake Monsters have enjoyed a newfound flexibility to build rosters on the field that represent Vermont while committing more firmly to partnerships with Vermont businesses off the field, Knudsen said.

“I think the fans loved it because the level of baseball is much better than when it was a single-A, short season,” Knudsen said. “The guys are all in college. They’re from all across the country, but there’s also some Vermont identity here.”

(Via Community News Service, a University of Vermont journalism internship.)

Education

Start somewhere to go somewhere — might be summer job

Margo Bartsch
Contributor

The unemployment rate for recent college graduates is 50 percent higher than the national average, The Wall Street Journal reported this June. How can a high school or college student begin to get a jump start to beat this alarming trend?

You still have time to get a summer job to learn personal and team accountability,

financial management and build your resume and LinkedIn.

Your first job can begin building work skills and social interactions. In fact, Hannaford on Dorset Street is conducting interviews on the spot for open positions. Hannaford requires a minimum age of 16 to work in the front-end and produce departments or 18 to work in the bakery, deli and meat departments.

Although some students might wonder,

how can being a supermarket cashier or stacking fresh fruits and vegetables help my future career? Gaining work skills in one role can morph into experiences that are applicable to a variety of industries.

Here’s a true story about how working at a supermarket can start a career trajectory. This June, The Wall Street Journal profiled the Albertson’s CEO, Susan Morris, who made a \$24.6 billion bid to purchase Kroger’s. The largest grocery operator in the U.S., Morris rose to the top job after working 40 years at Albertson’s.

Morris began working at Albertson’s while in high school at the customer service desk selling lottery tickets and calling customers about bounced checks. In college, she continued working as a store sales manager and was promoted to run the Denver locations.

To start, having a first job is the first step to gaining accountability for yourself, the team and the company’s mission. Developing important workforce skills such as interacting with peers, managers and customers builds useful character traits.

A work ethic is formed in listening to others, communicating clearly and solving problems. Work builds the skills to respond to others in a timely manner with helpful and accurate information.

Working within a variety of job roles and managerial styles, the student can learn helpful lessons about the work dynamic and their personal interests. They are gaining hands-on experience in approaching problems and working with others, while being responsible and respectful within a range of situations.

Second, learning financial management for one’s self and within a team is an essential skill. For example, Hannaford pays around \$15 an hour as a starting wage. For lunch, you can go to Burlington Bagel Bakery across the street where sandwiches range from \$8 to \$12.

Thus, the student begins the budgeting process when considering the amount of work it takes to earn a specific sandwich when evaluating their menu items: the cheaper sandwich is around a half-hour of work, or the more expensive choice is nearly an hour’s worth of work.

Living within a budget is difficult with inflation. This May, NBC News reported that 50 percent of parents are financially supporting their adult children with a monthly average of \$1,474.

Surprisingly, 18 percent of parents believe they will be indefinitely supporting their children financially.

In fact, U.S. Census Bureau data reports that nearly one in three adults ages 18 to 34 live in their parents’ home.

This June, CNBC explained that 59 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 25) say it is a priority to have a well-funded savings account. However, only 15 percent put a portion of their paycheck into a savings account, according to a 2024 Bank of America survey.

Finally, work experience is essential in creating a LinkedIn profile, resume and cover letter. Start by reviewing a range of job postings. Then, identify words describing the work requirements and match those qualifications with prior job responsibilities. Be sure to include the number of people on your team, management structure and personal accomplishments.

Job applications are typically scanned with artificial intelligence for key words, work duration and quantifiable results. Highlighting a variety of responsibilities within past jobs can show flexibility, group contribution and time management.

Last April, LinkedIn highlighted the importance for high school students to develop their professional profile. The summary portion shares career goals, personality traits and work skills. In addition, the recommendation section includes quotations from work supervisors, mentors and teachers.

Summer work experiences can extend into the school year. Although many first jobs may not result in a long-term career, you have to start somewhere to go somewhere.

(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.)

Happy hour



Photo by Lee Krohn

Wringing the last few moments of swimming before the day is completely done.

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Hi! Neighbor

Demick seems born to restoring gravestones, old barns

Phyl Newbeck
Contributor

Peter Demick doesn’t live in the past, but he does appreciate it. Over the years, he has restored 68 old barns across the state, and locally, he devotes time to restoring gravestones in Charlotte cemeteries.

When Demick retired from his work as a stone mason and barn builder last year, he rejoined the cemetery commission while continuing to volunteer on the conservation commission.

“I’m busier now than when I was working,” he said.

Demick had been on the Cemetery Commission before because of his professional work as a stone mason. He learned to restore gravestones when he took a course on monument preservation at Cathedral Stoneworks in Washington, D.C.

“I loved the history and everything that is part of it,” he said.

Demick has passed the craft on to others, teaching monument restoration for at least 10 years across the state. He is a lifetime member of the Vermont Old Cemetery Association.

Charlotte has two public cemeteries. Demick said there are hardly any gravestones left at the cemetery on Spear Street because the occupants were itinerant farm workers whose families couldn’t afford good markers. He said the Barber Cemetery on Greenbush

Road dates back to the town founders, with some gravestones from the late 1700s.

Every year, Diane LeBerge schedules a day when volunteers head to the cemeteries for clean-up work. Demick is heartened that there are a number of people in their 30s who take part. He helps restore the stones that are in need of repair. He noted that the lettering on marble headstones tends to fade over time and not much can be done to fix that. Granite headstones are much stronger.

Demick has been on the Charlotte Conservation Commission for three years, trying to find a balance between the need for housing and the recognition that wildlife has a place in town. He put a few wildlife cameras on his 77-acre property and has been amazed by the animals he has seen.

When the conservation commission found itself with extra funds from a calendar sale, Demick bought several wildlife cameras to put around town. He said the conservation commission has received no money from the town budget for the last few years, so he bought a few more on his own and on Front Porch Forum he asked for people to host them.

“An amazing number of people volunteered,” he said.

The result of that project is a 24-minute video which Demick plans to show at the senior center. The video, which was taken just off Spear Street, ends with a family of bears.

Demick has been pushing Charlotte to develop a town wildlife map and said he has been discouraged by the selectboard’s unwillingness to provide funding. He has offered to match any money the selectboard designates.

In 1987, Demick founded his business, Vermont Walkways and Stone. “I fell into it by accident,” he said. “I worked for a guy in Hinesburg for a year and discovered I had a knack for flipping stones and putting them together.”

Demick is probably best known for his barn restoration work. He has rebuilt 68 barns that date back to before 1850.

“I just refuse to let them go,” he said.

Some of the barns have been massive, including one on Leavensworth Road that was 30x50 feet, and another in Johnson that was 40x100 feet and had two cellars. Demick has a rebuilt 1808 barn on his property as well as one from 1840 which he calls his “new” barn. One came from Monkton and the other from Ferrisburgh.

A number of Demick’s reconstructions have been relocated to Charlotte, and he notes that one caveat with his restoration work is he will not move barns out of state. Demick is a seventh generation Vermonter, but as an Army brat, he moved around a lot. He came back to Vermont for college and never left, moving to Charlotte in 2000.

Demick lives on a farm that has been



Photo by Karen Allen
Peter Demick enjoying down time at the Westport Yacht Club.

certified by the Northeast Organic Farming Association with 700 grape vines. Tom Kenyon farms two clover fields on the property and Demick keeps bees in a Slovenian bee building which he built using wood from a garage behind what is now Philo Ridge Farm. Demick gives away the 22 to 25 cases of honey he harvests each year but noted that bees are getting scarcer.

Demick has no website and no social media presence, but people seem to find him. “I’m retired,” he said, “but I can’t resist the allure of an old barn.”

Vermont History

Celebrating only Revolutionary War battle fought in VT

Dan Cole and
Scooter MacMillan

The Battle of Hubbardton may be more significant in our country's founding than Independence Day. On July 4, 1776, or Independence Day, a document was supposedly signed explaining the resolution for the separation from Britain that Congress had approved two days earlier on July 2.

Even whether July 4 is when the formal Declaration of Independence was signed, after it had been hastily written to explain the colonists' reasons for giving Britain the boot, is in doubt. Nowadays, many historians say that the Declaration of Independence was actually signed a month later on Aug. 2.

However, a date a year later — July 7, 1777 — may be an even more crucial date in the formation of our country. On that day, the Americans lost a battle but, as subsequent events turned out, won the Revolutionary War. The successful drive to independence may have begun at Hubbardton.

On Saturday and Sunday, July 12 and 13, about 150 reenactors relived that monumental battle on the site in Hubbardton, and with the advantage of hindsight, shared stories of the consequences of the fateful engagement, the only battle of the Revolutionary War fought entirely in Vermont.

When Lexington and Concord happened, initiating armed confrontation with the British, Ethan Allen saw an opportunity to sustain Vermont property rights. He knew that Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point were weak and poorly garrisoned, and felt that if he captured the forts in the name of the Continental Congress, Grants leaders could leverage the victories to achieve independence.

By 1775, the people of the 138 towns, in what was known then as the Hampshire Grants but came to be known as Vermont, had been resisting the Royal Colony of New York's claims on their land.

These westernmost grants were the wild frontier in those days; the people interested in settling tended to be independent-minded miscreants and rebellious misfits



Photos by Scooter MacMillan
Yugin Roh at 10 months was the youngest reenactor, dressed in her historically accurate clothes.

who came north in family groups to hack out a homestead in the wilderness. Most had a sour relationship with the established Congregationalist churches that controlled much of life in their communities. One historian commented that when the settlers moved north they failed to pack religion among their belongings. What they did bring was an egalitarianism that was remarkable for its time.

Ethan Allen, a born rebel, had been kicked out of two towns in his native Connecticut, and following the premature death of his father, had assumed the responsibility for the futures of all his siblings and his widowed mother. He felt

that land speculation in the Hampshire Grants was his best chance to establish family wealth; but when he and his extended family arrived in Arlington in the Grants, he was met with a controversy over the land titles.

For more than a decade, Hampshire Grants leaders had been confronting escalating altercations with the New York authorities. New York claimed all of what would become our state, basing their claims on a vague 1664 charter. Despite a stinging rebuke from Lord Shelburne on behalf of George III in 1767 that stated the King himself had sustained the Grants charters, and no colonial governor had the authority to override it, the New York administration continued to become more belligerent and aggressive in attempts to dispossess the people of the Grants.

If they were going to strike a blow for independence as a separate political entity, they would have to call themselves something. Initially they decided on "New Connecticut," but were advised that the name was already taken by an area in western Pennsylvania. Allen's good friend and volunteer military surgeon, Dr. Thomas Young, is sometimes credited with suggesting the territory's name be adapted from the French words for "green mountain" ("verde mont"), and the Green Mountain Boys went to war under the banner of "Vermont."

With the bloodless capture of both forts, Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys became household names throughout the colonies. The forts yielded more than 130 cannons, which, at the direction of



The reenactors sleep in tents, eat meals cooked over open fires of food that the soldiers at the time might have eaten and wear clothes that as near as possible are historically accurate in materials and construction.

Gen. George Washington, were dragged overland by Henry Knox to the heights above Boston to threaten the British occupation there. With British troops and forts no longer along Lake Champlain and with the withdrawal of the British from Boston, Britain's influence in New England was gone. It was a big deal.

And Britain chafed to regain what had been lost.

The leaders of Vermont, believing we had demonstrated both our independence and our competency, petitioned for the recognition to the Continental Congress that would sustain our property rights, but were basically told to go pound sand and accept New York sovereignty. When Vermont declined, we were considered in rebellion, not only against our neighboring states of New Hampshire and New York, but now also against the fledgling United States.

Nonetheless, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys found themselves on the battlefield fighting with New Englanders against the British.

Gen. John Burgoyne led a large army south from Canada in 1777 to drive a wedge between the colonies and isolate New England. The Vermonters recognized the threat to our region and begged Congress to provide troops for our defense, which Congress summarily rejected.

Burgoyne outflanked the colonial troops that garrisoned Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and on the morning

HISTORY

Continued from page 14

of July 6, 1777, the Continentals were forced to beat a hasty withdrawal, leaving Vermont open to invasion and almost defenseless.

Closely pursued by regiments under the command of arguably Burgoyne’s finest field commander, Simon Fraser, the British caught up with the exhausted rear guard of the colonial troops at Hubbardton on July 7, 1777.

These troops consisted primarily of Green Mountain Boys and militia from New Hampshire and Massachusetts under the command of Seth Warner and Ebenezer Francis, who fought Fraser’s men to a standstill in a fierce battle. Casualties were high on both sides. With the subsequent retreat of Warner’s men, Burgoyne could claim a victory.

However, the tenacity of the untrained Grants settlers and regional militia

was a blow to British confidence. The Continentals’ battle strategy shifted to rear-guard action, covering the retreat. This was called by some of the reenactors the greatest rear-guard action in history.

The bulk of the soldiers managed to get away to Saratoga where they contributed to Burgoyne’s defeat and surrender on Oct. 17, 1777.

Historians have suggested that Burgoyne’s surrender at Saratoga may be the most significant turning point of the war. Besides being a great morale boost, this victory helped to convince France to join the war on the Continentals’ side, which meant a boon in money, soldiers and munitions, but which also meant that Britain was now engaged in a worldwide naval war.

(Dan Cole is president of the Charlotte Historical Society and a volunteer guide and researcher at the Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington.)



Reenactors participate in a loading and reloading competition to demonstrate the difficulties of fighting with the guns of the day.



Reenactors pick which side of the war they wish to portray. Here a group of “British” soldiers dine.

Gardening

Be on alert, European cherry fruit fly threatens Vermont



Photo by Alison Morris/bugwood.org

The European cherry fruit fly adult is about 4 to 5 millimeters long with a shiny black body and distinctive yellow markings.

Lisa Halvorsen
University of Vermont Extension

The University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets are urging Vermont cherry growers and pick-your-own customers to be on the lookout for the European cherry fruit fly. Although this insect has not yet been detected in Vermont, it has been found in western New York, as well as in Ontario and Quebec, with new infestations detected in 2024.

The European cherry fruit fly (*Ragoletis cerasi*) is an invasive pest that poses a serious threat to cherry crops. If it becomes established in Vermont, it could have major impacts on both commercial cherry production and backyard trees.

The pest can use both cherry (*Prunus*) species and honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) species as its host. While it prefers sweet cherries and honeysuckle as hosts, it also may be found on tart cherries and wild cherries such as black cherry.

The adult fly is about 4 to 5 millimeters long with a shiny black body and distinctive yellow markings. It lays its eggs inside ripening cherries. The larvae feed on the fruit for up to six weeks, making it unmarketable.

Currently, there is a quarantine in New York covering 7,353 square miles and 1,539 acres of commercial cherry production. It includes all of Cayuga, Erie, Genesee,

Monroe, Niagara, Onondaga, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Seneca and Wayne Counties.

“We’re asking everyone involved with cherries, whether you grow them, sell them or pick them, to keep an eye out for signs of this pest,” says Ginger Nickerson, the University of Vermont Extension forest pest education coordinator. “Early detection is our best defense.”

What to look for:

- Tiny puncture marks on the surface of cherries, which may be exit holes left by mature larvae as they emerge from the fruit.
- Soft, wilted or rotting fruit that may contain larvae.

How you can help:

- Inspect cherries carefully during harvest.
- Report any suspicious fruit or insect sightings to vtinvasives.org.
- Do not transport fresh cherries or plant material from affected areas.
- You can find more information on the U.S. Department of Agriculture animal and plant health inspection service’s European cherry fruit fly page (go.uvm.edu/cherry-fly).

“By staying alert, Vermonters can help prevent the spread of this pest and protect our fruit farmers,” Nickerson concludes.



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Our Local Feast

Blueberry season inspires yummy blueberry reveries

Dorothy Grover-Read
Contributor

Blueberry season! It's a happy day indeed when our local blueberries come in. Nothing better than eating a half pint in the car on the way back from the farmstand, making a mental note to buy more next time, or not go food shopping on an empty stomach. However, even if we're not hungry, the sight of those plump and juicy blueberries is irresistible.

They are also great fun to pick, especially with kids; it goes fast, they don't get bored, but often get sidetracked as they gleefully add as many to their tummies as the basket. They know a treat of some sort will be theirs at the end of the excursion, even if it is just more berries.

The bounty will keep in the freezer all year, supplying baked goods and smoothies the winter long. Regardless of what some experts tell you, these frozen berries will keep a full year in your freezer. Adam's Berry Farm actually offers gallon bags of their frozen blueberries in spring at a nice discount, making room for this year's harvest. It's a bargain, and they are still delicious.

Blueberries have a special place in my heart's memory. Every summer, my brothers and I would head out to an old abandoned farm on one of the back roads in town with my mom and grandmother. Through the brambles, there were high bush blueberries in great abundance. We attached lengths of rope to our buckets to wear around our necks so both hands were free to pick, always on the lookout for the black snakes that made their home there.

Gallons of berries later, Mom would go to work making jams and preserves, a beautiful pie of course, blueberry pancakes and muffins, and what we didn't eat that week went into the freezer for another time.

There were blueberries at every meal, and our favorite snack was berries and cream, which was really just blueberries in milk with a bit of sugar mixed in. Good memories, and my grandkids love this as well.

These sweet and sometimes slightly sour treats also signal high summer. The cherries are here, strawberries still amazing and we know peaches, plums and blackberries are not far behind. When we are really lucky, we can have them all at once.

There is no such thing as too many blueberries. I don't hoard the stash of my childhood, but I freeze several gallons for use all year and can enjoy fresh through September from our local farms.

The kids and I like to pick at Sweet Roots or Adams here in town, and they are always delicious. For a special treat, Sweet Roots even has blueberry ice cream cones, everything locally sourced, of course, from the berries to the cream.

At the farmers market this week, in



Photos by Dorothy Grover-Read

After a visit to a pick-your-own farm, one can start dreaming of the delights to come from the kitchen. Pies? Pancakes? Muffins? It's all delicious and seasonal, but the berries also freeze well for enjoyment in winter.

In addition to my quart of blueberries, I found some fragrant lavender and knew I needed to combine the two. I love making muffins and scones because they freeze beautifully, and this combination sounded really delicious.

Lavender is an underused herb, but lends itself well to baked goods and even savory dishes. Use a light hand though, as this herb is strong, especially if using the dried flowers.

These scones can easily be made with or without dairy, and when blueberry season is over, you can use another berry or chopped fruit. What is in season locally will always taste the best.

I know there will be questions, so let's talk for a minute about scones versus muffins. Both are quick breads, but their ingredients, prep and baking techniques and finished product are quite different.

Scones usually do not contain eggs, but some recipes do. Often, one combines chilled butter with the dry ingredients before adding the liquid, much like a savory biscuit. They are crumblier than a muffin, more dense, not as sweet, and are cut out or formed and baked on a sheet. Most contain a fresh or dried fruit, and maybe some spices.

Muffins are sweeter, softer and textured more like a cake, often use eggs and contain everything imaginable from chocolate chips to pineapple, and they are cooked in muffin cups. A light hand in mixing is also important for muffins. Muffins are quicker to make than scones and not as messy.

Do you have a favorite? Are you in the scone or muffin camp? Maybe both?

Irresistible blueberry lavender scones

Preheat oven to 425 F or to 400 F oven



Blueberry and lavender scones are tasty, moist and tender. My mother, Sylvia Grover, always said that there should only be enough batter to hold the blueberries together, and we'll not argue with that wisdom.

with convection fan. Line a baking sheet with parchment or silicone mat.

Place 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter or vegan butter in the freezer to chill.

In a large bowl, combine:

- 250 grams (2 cups) white whole wheat flour (King Arthur golden wheat)
- 185 grams (1 1/4 cups) unbleached organic all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 teaspoons of non-aluminum baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of fresh lavender flowers, or 1 tablespoon of dried.
- Set aside.
- In a pint measuring cup, combine:
- 1 cup of unsweetened soy, or other plant milk, or dairy milk
- 1 tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon

juice

- 2 tablespoons of coconut or organic white sugar
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract

If you have dairy buttermilk on hand, use a cup of that and omit the plant milk and vinegar.

Get your surface ready for rolling, dust lightly with flour. Grate the chilled butter into the dry ingredients and combine with a pastry blender, or your fingers, until a mealy texture. This won't take long.

Toss in 2 cups of fresh blueberries.

Mix well, then make a well in the center and pour in the liquid ingredients. With your floured hands, fold the dry over the wet a few times until it starts to come together, then turn out onto your floured board. It will be messy; did you forget to flour your hands?

Very gently, combine the ingredients using a fold over a few times; you don't want to develop the gluten and end up with tough scones. Push into a large round disc a little over an inch thick.

Cut the circle into eight pie-shaped wedges, just like cutting a pizza. If you want smaller scones, you can use a biscuit cutter and reroll one time any leftover dough, and there will be some. The advantage of the wedge method is no waste at all, and the scones all stay soft and tender.

Place on the parchment. Make an egg glaze with a small egg and about a tablespoon of water to thin it out. Brush gently on the scones and pop them in the oven. If you want to keep this vegan, simply brush with a little more soy milk.

Set your timer for 10 minutes, turn the pan and cook another 7 or 8 minutes, until browned.

Moist and tender, serve straight up, they really need nothing else. But you can add butter or drizzle with a bit of honey, lemon curd or whipped cream.

Blueberry ginger scones

Don't care for the flavor of lavender? Omit it and add a grated 1-inch knob of fresh ginger and a third of a cup of candied ginger, minced.

Freezing blueberries

Easy, and so rewarding in the middle of winter, and we can enjoy our local harvest all year. Frozen blueberries are tasty in all kinds of baked goods and even in your morning berry bowl with a quick thaw.

First, pick through and remove any stubborn stems or too-soft berries. Pat dry with a towel and place in a single layer on a baking sheet.

Pop in the freezer until firm, then decant into a freezer container for use all winter.

The berries will remain separate so you can take out just as much as you need, no clumping.

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On Books

Summer’s here: light and beachy, and un-light and un-beachy

Katherine Arthaud
Contributor

Yesterday I returned home after a week in Nantucket. I don’t know quite what it is about the island that draws me back year after year. Many say they can’t stand it because of the crowds and all the cars in town — suburban’s the size of Moby Dick squeezing themselves down narrow cobblestone streets, oblivious pedestrians gripping dripping ice cream cones drifting blindly into crossroads, that kind of thing.

And sure, the crowds and the cars can be annoying, but for me there’s something greater than all of that. Beauty, peace, fresh ocean air, dunes, beaches, amazing restaurants, bluejays singing from the scrub bushes, bike trails everywhere and not many hills; I love it all. Which is why I keep returning and, also, why I keep reading (and rereading) Elin Hilderbrand novels, the majority of which take place on the island.

This isn’t the first time I’ve written about Hilderbrand and her books. Last summer I told about how one morning my son and I wandered up the street with our iced coffees to check out one of the two bookstores on the island and arrived at Mitchell’s Book Corner just minutes after Ms. Hilderbrand had concluded her weekly Wednesday book signing.

“You just missed her!” the cashier said to us.

Wow. The Queen of the Beach Read. In real life. I figured it just was not meant to be.

This year, Elin Hilderbrand and her books were the furthest thing from my mind as my daughter Caroline, her girlfriend Jenna and I rounded the corner onto Orange Street in Caroline’s Volvo and noticed a long line on the sidewalk outside of Mitchell’s Book Corner. I rolled down the window and asked one of the women standing there what everyone was lined up for. “Elin Hilderbrand,” she said.

“Oh, wow,” I said. “It’s Wednesday, the day she does book signings! But we’ll never find parking ...”

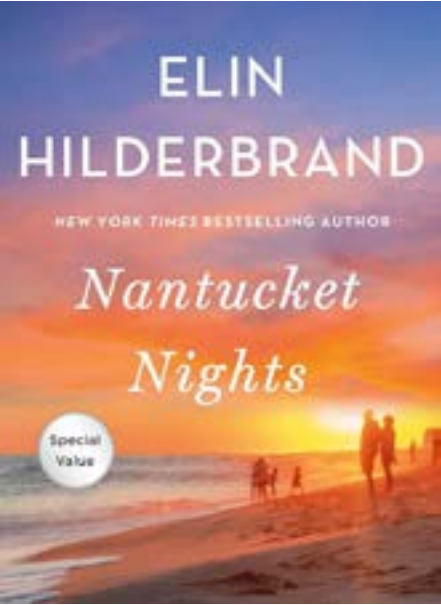
“How about right here?” Jenna said, wheeling the car into a shady spot 20 feet from the store entrance.

A miracle.

I was surprised the girls were into it, but Jenna’s mom loves Hilderbrand’s books, apparently, and a signed volume, she said, would make the perfect gift. So, we got in line and soon found ourselves in lively conversation with a flamboyantly friendly young woman in a blue sundress. She was very entertaining, and the wait went quickly, and before we knew it we were climbing the tiny wrought-iron spiral staircase to the store’s second story, where we beheld, sitting at a table in a University of Miami T-shirt, signing books with a blue sharpie, the Queen of the Beach Read Herself.

“For some reason I’m feeling extremely nervous,” our new friend said. We agreed that we were feeling the same. There was something about this encounter that felt very special, very long awaited.

As instructed by a bookstore staff person, we chose books from a shelf to be signed by the author. Jenna picked what she thought she remembered was one of her mother’s favorites, and I picked one I didn’t remember well, with the idea that I would read it again.



And then we got to Ms. Hilderbrand herself, who signed our books with a flourish and talked with us for a few precious seconds (I asked about the new series she is writing with her daughter), then someone took our picture with someone’s iPhone, and before we knew it we were hustled back down the spiral staircase to the cashier downstairs, then out into the brilliant summer sunshine.

“Nantucket Nights,” which I’d read but had mostly forgotten, did not disappoint. It was totally satisfying — suspenseful, rich, Nantucket-y, smooth, engaging, a tad steamy. Just what the doctor ordered. I finished it on the ferry back to the mainland, the orange sun setting slowly over a glittering Nantucket Sound.

So, if you’re on the hunt for a good summer read, I highly recommend Hilderbrand’s Nantucket novels. Start anywhere. There isn’t a bad one in the bunch. And if you’ve read them all and, like me, don’t tend to retain the details, go ahead and reread one. I very much doubt you will be disappointed.

One reason I was so keen to dive into “Nantucket Nights” was because of the very un-light, un-beachy book I was reading when I bought it. “Prophet’s Song,” by Paul Lynch, won the 2023 Booker Prize, and judges that year called it “timely and unforgettable ... a remarkable accomplishment for a novelist to capture the social and political anxieties of our moment so compellingly.”

I don’t remember exactly what was going on in 2023, but I can tell you this novel hits the nail on the head in terms of capturing the social and political anxieties of now to the point that it was actually troubling to read it, despite the galloping and extraordinary prose. Not what I would have picked for lounging on the soft sands of Madaket, in other words, but brilliant and poetic, nonetheless. I am very glad I read it.

It opens in Dublin on a dark, wet evening. Eilish Stack, microbiologist, wife, mother of four, is staring out the window “watching the darkening garden,” when there comes a knocking at the door.

“She hears it pass into thought, the sharp, insistent rapping, each knock possessed so fully of the knocker she begins to frown.”

Infant in her arms, she opens the door to two men “standing before the porch glass almost faceless in the dark.” They turn out to be plainclothes officers from Ireland’s newly

formed secret police looking to interrogate her husband Larry, a trade unionist.

At the risk of spoiling the experience of reading this excellent novel, I will just say that things go downhill fast after page 4 for the Stack family and many others, as it becomes evident to the reader (and the characters in the unfolding text) that Ireland is falling apart fast in the clutches of an authoritarian government. People disappearing, prices skyrocketing, fighting, bombs, counter-resistance — it’s intense and distressing to journey with Eilish as she

desperately tries to keep her family, including her aging father on the other side of town, together and intact. As she tries to survive.

“Prophet’s Song” is a dystopian nightmare, really, and not so far-fetched as it might have seemed back in 2023. The book is not so much an escape as a brutal and terrifying reminder of the dangers of authoritarianism and of the growing dysfunction and derangement of our own country, where we are experiencing the rollback of so many human rights and protections, along with the frequent, real-life horror of masked ICE officers kidnapping people and taking them to places where their families, and even lawyers, cannot find or reach them. It hits, in other words, disturbingly close to home.

But the book is beautifully written, with lots of commas instead of periods and beautiful run-on sentences that draw the reader in and forward, rushing headlong with Eilish Stack and her family into an unknown future, frantically hoping for resolution, restitution and a return of blessed normalcy.

I love the frontispiece, from Bertholt Brecht:

In the dark times
will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times.

Highly recommend. But maybe not for the beach.

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Calendar

Send your events two weeks in advance to news@thecharlottenews.org.

‘Kin’
Friday-Sunday, Thru July 27
“Kin,” a new musical, will be performed in Main Street Landing’s Blackbox in Burlington in a production by Workaround Theatre Company with a cast featuring many performers from Charlotte and staff and graduates of Champlain Valley Union High. Tensions rise when a mysterious cult moves into an otherwise quiet mountain town. To redeem his troubled past, the mayor’s son infiltrates the cult’s festival, where he finds himself caught between two families that are more similar than anyone could have thought. Inspired by true events from the 1980s and told through an original 80s-pop-inspired score, “Kin” is about moving on without letting go. For tickets and times: <https://tinyurl.com/44vadbzd>.

CHARLOTTE

Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 24, 5:30-7 p.m.
Dave Vallett will play American folk and country, Irish music and humorous originals on the Charlotte Town Green. Individual donors from Charlotte sponsored this concert.

Art exhibition reception
Thursday, July 24, 3-5:30 p.m.
Visitors are invited to an informal reception for the Birds of Vermont 2025 show, Birds and Myth. Explore visual and written art at your own pace, meet artists, be inspired, ask questions and browse through the book of artists’ statements. What myths with and about birds inform you, challenge you, guide you? Please register (helps with refreshment planning) by calling 802-434-2167

Bird monitoring walk
Saturday, July 26, 7:30-9 a.m.
Birds of Vermont in Huntington welcomes birders, whether they are current, experienced, newbie or would-be, to its monthly monitoring walk to record birds at the museum’s trails, forest and meadow. Bring your own binoculars, dress for weather. Tick repellent and a water bottle are also recommended. Free, but a suggested



Photo by Morgan Barnes

You might see an Eastern phoebe gathering nesting material on the Birds of Vermont’s monthly monitoring walk to record birds at the museum’s trails, forest and meadow on Saturday, July 26.

donation of \$5-\$15. Size is limited, so register at 802-434-2167.

Music at town beach
Wednesday, July 30, 5 p.m.
Skylark, a quartet made of Vermont Symphony musicians, will be performing at Charlotte Beach. This picnic event is a sensory experience not to be missed. Picnicking at 5 p.m., music at 6 p.m. The event is free with your beach pass or daily beach parking. Donations to help pay the musicians will be requested.

CHARLOTTE

Grange on the Green concert
Thursday, July 31, 5:30-7 p.m.
Forest Station, a local bluegrass band will perform on the Charlotte Town Green. The concert sponsor is Otter Creek Awnings.

ALS Day with Lake Monsters
Saturday, Aug. 2, 6:05 p.m.
Support efforts to find a cure for ALS and enjoy a baseball game on ALS Day with the Vermont Lake Monsters at Centennial Field to help raise funds and

awareness for Vermonters affected by the neurodegenerative disease, ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease. For every ticket The ALS Association will receive a portion of every tickets sold, but tickets must be purchased by the day before, Aug. 1. On game day, try your luck in the 50/50 raffle and witness some brave Lake Monsters take part in the Ice Bucket Challenge. Together, we can help make ALS a livable disease and work towards a cure.

One act of play gone wrong
Friday-Sunday, Aug. 1-3, 2 & 7 p.m.
The “One-Act Play That Goes Wrong” is the one-act version of what would later become the global phenomenon “The Play That Goes Wrong.” It premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2012 and was the foundation of the full-length West End and Broadway smash. The fictional Cornley Amateur Dramatics Society attempts to stage a 1920s murder mystery, only to be foiled by missed cues, falling scenery and escalating disaster. “This play feels like a perfect fit for who we are,” says director Bill Fidler, a senior at CVU. “It’s chaotic, creative, and full of surprises.” Performances are at the Off Center for the Dramatic Arts (1127 North Ave, Burlington) Friday-Sunday, Aug. 1-3 at 7 p.m. with one Saturday matinee on Aug. 2 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15 general admission (\$10 students) and available at <https://tinyurl.com/3w46nw49>.

Learn about bird crafting
Sunday, Aug. 3, 10:30 a.m.-noon
Create soft-sculpture replicas of real birds lost to collisions at Birds of Vermont. Contribute to a traveling exhibit. Learn practical ways to protect birds in the built environment. Make a small fabric bird based on a real migratory bird found in Vermont. Learn about migratory birds in Vermont and the hazards of glass windows while crafting. The sculptures will become part of a traveling art exhibit of 10,000+ birds, raising awareness about bird-building collisions in the United States. Every year, nearly 2 billion birds die after colliding with glass in our country. More details at birdsofvermont.org/event/bird-craft-conservation.

Pie & ice cream social
Sunday, Aug. 3, noon-3 p.m.
The Rokeby Museum will hold its annual Pie & Ice Cream Social on Sunday, Aug. 3, noon-3 p.m.

‘Blithe Spirit’ auditions
Sunday, 4 p.m., & Tuesday, 6 p.m., Aug. 3 & 5
The Valley Players are holding auditions for their fall production of “Blithe Spirit” by Noël Coward on Sunday, Aug. 3, at 4 p.m. and Tuesday, Aug. 5 at 6 p.m., at the Valley Players Theater, 4254 Main Street (Route 100), Waitsfield. Auditions are open to all; no monologues are required. Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script. British accents are not necessary.

Milton National Night Out
Tuesday, Aug. 5, 5:30-8 p.m.
The police and community of Milton are holding their annual Milton National Night Out at Bombardier Park in West Milton. The Milton Police are serving free barbecue and The Hitmen are serving free music. There will be kids’ games, family-friendly activities, safety demonstrations, K-9 presentations and more.

Sunset bird & nature walk
Thursday, Aug. 7
Enjoy a sunset stroll around the Birds of Vermont’s clearings. Erin Talmage and Ali Wagner will lead the walk. Not an early riser? You’re not alone. Some birds also prefer to sing, call or display in late afternoon and early evening. Although we may see and hear fewer species than we do at dawn, a late day ramble gives us more time to appreciate each kind and to better learn their songs. Call 802 434-2167 to reserve your spot or visit birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming. Suggested donation: \$5-\$15.

Guide to drawing & painting birds
Saturday, Aug. 9, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Explore the beauty of nature through art in this workshop at the Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington. Tap into the rich resource of Bob Spear’s dioramas and the museum’s natural history library to draw and paint birds in their natural habitats. Touching on bird anatomy and reflecting on habitats, the course will use watercolor and colored pencils. Three-hour workshop (ncludes all materials) is \$68. Register with the Davis Studio at <https://tinyurl.com/43y3j6ts>.

Age Well luncheon
Tuesday, Aug. 12, 11:30 a.m.
St. Catherine of Siena and Age Well are offering a free luncheon for anyone 60 or older in the St. Catherine of Siena Parish Hall at 72 Church Street in Shelburne. The check-in time is 11:30 a.m., and the meal will be served at noon. There is a \$5 suggested donation. The menu is chicken-n-biscuits, red mashed potatoes, broccoli florets, melon and milk. The deadline to register is Aug. 7. Contact Molly BonGiorno at 802-662-5283 or mbongiorno@agewellvt.org.

Shelburne Museum free summer night
Thursday, Aug. 14, 5-7:30 p.m.
Visit galleries, listen to live music, enjoy a picnic, stroll through gardens and take in the splendor of a summer’s night at the

CHARLOTTE TOWN MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Visit charlottevt.org for more information

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, July 24, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, July 28, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 7, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, Aug. 11, 7 p.m.



Charlotte Energy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, Aug. 12, 7 p.m.

Development Review Board Meeting
Wednesday, Aug. 13, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission meeting
Thursday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting
Monday, Aug. 25, 7 p.m.

Library News

Volunteers made Friends of Charlotte Library book sale a success

Margaret Woodruff
Director

Many thanks to all who donated books and puzzles for the annual book sale on July 13. Also, thanks to all who came to the sale. It was a lively, successful event. We are very grateful for the many volunteers who spent hours sorting and displaying the wares.

As a reminder, the Friends of the Charlotte Library advocate and provide financial support for our beloved library. The support helps the library with physical needs (carts, shelving, books, etc.), library media (Hoopla, Libby, Biblio+), as well as helping to fund the many programs offered for all ages.

Please note that a limited assortment of books and puzzles will be available for sale for the next couple of weeks.

Share your harvest table
Tuesdays-Fridays, 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Are you overflowing with kale, carrots or cucumbers? Share with your neighbors. The library will have a table set up on the porch throughout the summer. Bring what you can, take what you need. Please drop off veggies at the desk.

‘On the Trail’ photography

Jeffrey Trubisz has “trekked, scrambled and hiked hundreds of trails up mountains, through forests, into canyons and along beaches.” He said, “The camera enables me to record that immersion. I hope that in observing my photographs you feel the essence of the place as if you were on the trail.” Enjoy the breathtaking images through August and join us for a gallery talk with Trubisz at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 19.

Town Cooling Centers

The Charlotte Library and the Charlotte Senior Center are designated cooling centers with air-conditioned facilities

where you can cool down during hot weather. Community cooling centers help provide temporary relief and are especially helpful when the National Weather Service issues a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning.

During a heat advisory or excessive heat warning, notices will be placed in Front Porch Forum in addition to notices on social media and the library and senior center websites.

You can find additional information about managing during heat emergencies on our website.

Programs for kids
(Find all the kids’ summer programs on the Color Our World summer schedule at <https://tinyurl.com/yvd8nvrf>.)

Family art evening
Monday, July 28, 4:30-6 p.m.

The last art evening in July will be celebrated this Monday. This Monday’s medium and theme are clay and slime.

Music on the porch
Wednesday, July 30, 3:30 p.m.

Enjoy old-time and Irish music performed by Zachary DeFranco on the Charlotte Library porch. This is a family event, all ages welcome.

What’s in the summer sky?
Wednesday, July 30, 6-7 p.m.

Join members of the Vermont Astronomical Society as they share their knowledge of the evening sky via a slide show and the use of both a solar and lunar telescope. On Wednesday, July 30, or Thursday, July 31, depending on the weather, members of the Vermont Astronomical Society will talk about the sky and what to look for with and without telescopes and other visual aids. An indoor presentation will start at 6 p.m. with the possibility of solar observing before and lunar observation after. This is a family



Photo by Susanna Kahn
Nan Mason and Genevieve Trono welcome book buyers at the Friends Book Sale on July 13.

program. Ages 7 and up recommended.

Very Merry Theatre ‘Fame’
Friday, Aug. 1, 2 p.m.

The Very Merry Theatre traveling show will present “Fame” on the Charlotte Library lawn. Please bring low lawn chairs, blankets, water and sunscreen. The library will not be open; only the restrooms will be accessible.

Weekly summer programs

Preschool story time
Tuesdays, 10 a.m.

Come to the Charlotte Library for preschool stories, crafts and activities. No registration required. Age 2 and over.

Preschool free play
Wednesdays, 10 a.m.

Play in the preschool years enables children to explore and make sense of the world around them, as well as to use and develop their imagination. Explore the sensory table, sorting, playing with blocks, playdoh — these are a few of the open-ended projects planned for Wednesday morning play-based learning at the Charlotte Library.

LIBRARY continued on page 22

CALENDAR

Continued from page 20

Shelburne Museum for free. The museum will stay open from 5-7:30 p.m.

Middlebury film festival
Wednesday-Sunday, Aug. 20-24

The 11th annual Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival brings more than 100 films across seven screens. The festival includes 55 Vermont premieres, six world premieres and 12 special panels and talks. Approximately two-thirds of the festival’s screenings will be accompanied by a live, on-stage Q&A from a visiting filmmaker. Get passes here mnff2025.eventive.org/passes/ buy.

Festival of woodcarving
Wednesday, Friday, Aug. 20-22

Green Mountain Woodcarvers Matt Strong and Bob Lindemann lead a three-day workshop to create a scaled-down great blue heron. More info: <https://tinyurl.com/mry28y4n>. The woodcarving festival will

be followed by the annual carvers show on Saturday, Aug. 23, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. At the show, discover some of the variety of styles and techniques possible: from caricature carving to Scandinavian flat-plane carvings. Demonstrations are planned throughout the day. This is a good opportunity to learn how woodcarvers, using simple hand tools, transform a block of wood into a piece of art.

Softball tournament
Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 23 & 24

The seventh annual Harper Rose Briar Men’s Softball Tournament will be held at Kampersville in Salisbury. This tournament is held in memory of Harper Rose Briar, who died on Jan. 24, 2019, at 6 months old after being given an overdose of a medication containing diphenhydramine, and to raise awareness about the risks of over-the-counter medications for children. All the proceeds are donated to a local family or nonprofit in need. The registration deadline is July 23. The cost is \$300 per team. To sign up or for more info contact Brenda Colburn at 802-772-5015 or bcolburnmsw@gmail.com.

com.

Sunset bird & nature walk
Aug. 28, 7 p.m.

Enjoy a sunset stroll around the Birds of Vermont’s clearings. Erin Talmage and Ali Wagner will lead the walk. Not an early riser? You’re not alone. Some birds also prefer to sing, call or display in late afternoon and early evening. Although we may see and hear fewer species than we do at dawn, a late day ramble gives us more time to appreciate each kind and to better learn their songs. Call 802 434-2167 to reserve your spot or visit birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming. Suggested donation: \$5-\$15.

Fall woodland training
Friday-Sunday, Sept. 12-14

Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife invites landowners, foresters, and conservation-minded individuals to its fall cooperator training, held at Kehoe Conservation Camp on the shores of Lake Bomoseen. This free, 2 1/2-day program immerses participants in the science and art

of woodland stewardship. With presentations from state and local experts in forestry and wildlife management and stories from fellow landowners, the training explores forest ecology, habitat enhancement, invasive species control, conservation planning and how to maintain connected and resilient landscapes. Applications are open now. Learn more or apply at vtcoverts.org. For questions, email info@vtcoverts.org.

Words in the Woods
Saturday, Sept. 20, 11 a.m.

Vermont Humanities Words in the Woods events allow Vermonters and visitors to enjoy our state’s natural beauty while listening to and reading literature in the outdoors at different Vermont State Parks. The fifth of this year’s readings will be at Mt. Philo State Park and will feature the Young Writers Project (YWP), an independent nonprofit begun in 2006 in Burlington to inspire, mentor, publish and promote young writers and artists. Vermont Humanities will cover park entries for the program.



Bianca Stone, Vermont poet laureate, reads her poetry at the Quinlan Schoolhouse to kick off the Grange on the Green concert series on July 10.

LIBRARY
Continued from page 21

Baby Time
Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

An unstructured hour for parents, caregivers and babies to play, explore books and chat in the young children’s area. Ages birth to 18 months.

Let’s Lego
Saturdays, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Drop in for Lego free play. We’ll have loads of Lego bricks out, along with some books and prompts for inspiration. For all ages. Please note: Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult.

Programs for adults

Garden Circle
Mondays, 8:30-10 a.m., & Wednesdays, 4:30-6 p.m.

Garden stewards Karen Tuininga and Linda Hamilton invite past and interested new members of to the library’s Garden Circle to join in tending the library gardens. These include the Rain Garden along the east side of the building, the Welcome Garden that wraps around the south end and the raised bed Food and Herb Gardens behind the Quinlan

Schoolhouse. Come regularly or as you can. All help welcome. Questions? Email seed@charlottepubliclibrary.org.

Stillwater meditation
Saturdays, 9 a.m.

Poetry and meditation are offered freely and in person to the Charlotte community. Come for quiet reflection, contemplation and gentle meditation instruction. Respect for all beings and faiths is a foundational quality of our time together. Beginning and experienced meditators are welcome.

Grange on the Green
Thursday, July 24, 5:30-7 p.m.

Enjoy an evening of music and merriment on the Charlotte Town Green with roots-based American folk and country music by Dave Vallett. Bring a picnic. The rain location is the Charlotte Senior Center.

Jigsaw puzzle competition
Saturday, July 26, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Come to the library for a fast and friendly puzzling competition. The first team to finish wins a prize and bragging rights. For adults and kids 11 and up. Team size is one to four people. The puzzle will be 500 pieces. There’s a two-hour time limit. Arrive 15 minutes early for the 10:30 a.m. start. Registration required at the desk or by emailing info@charlottepubliclibrary.org.



Photos by Susanna Kahn.
Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences trainer introduces a screech owl to the summer reading crew at the Charlotte Library on June 20.

Cooking book club
Tuesday, July 29, 5:30-7 p.m.

Join a summer celebration with Hetty Lui McKinnon’s “love letter to vegetables.” Her cookbook, “Tenderheart,” is the happy outcome of McKinnon’s love of vegetables, featuring 22 essential fruits and vegetables that become the basis for over 180 recipes. Stop by the library to choose a recipe for a dish to share and meet us on the library porch for dinner and conversation. No time to cook? There’s plenty to share so bring your good company.

Grange on the Green
Thursday, July 31, 5:30-7 p.m.

Enjoy an evening of music and merriment on the Charlotte Town Green with Forest Station & Friends. Bring a picnic and enjoy in good company. Thanks to series sponsors Point Bay Marina and Shearer Audi-VW-Acura and concert sponsor Otter Creek Awnings. The rain location is the Charlotte Senior Center.

Recurring programs

Book chat
Wednesdays, 3 p.m.

Meet each week to discuss new books, old books and books we might have missed. Each week, library director Margaret Woodruff selects a theme and

highlights related titles from the library collection. No registration necessary.

Crochet & knit night
Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m.

Join in a casual weekly session of crocheting and chatting, knitting and catching up. Bring your project or start a new one with yarn and needles available at the library, along with plenty of books to instruct and inspire. For teens and adults.

Library contact information:
Margaret Woodruff, director
Cheryl Sloan, youth services librarian
Susanna Kahn, tech librarian
Phone: 802-425-3864
Email: info@charlottepubliclibrary.org
For the latest information about programs, books and activity kits, sign up for the newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/n5usd25r>.

The Charlotte Library Board of Trustees meets the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., except the month of August unless otherwise rescheduled following the Open Meeting Law. Contact the library or visit the library website (charlottepubliclibrary.org) for more information.

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Senior Center News

Variety is the spice of August life at the senior center

Lori York
Director

August at the Charlotte Senior Center includes a vibrant mix of programming. This month's art exhibit highlights the diverse talents of the Friday Arts Group which is composed of local artists whose work includes watercolors, acrylics, oils, photography and assemblages. The variety of opportunities includes live music with Peter and Helen Rosenblum, the popular duo from Hinesburg; a healthy cooking class; and different language groups.

There are also a wide range of board and card games, creative groups and exercise activities. Whether you're interested in kayaking, mahjong or learning how to cook for one, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Programs

Music from the 50s, 60s & 70s Friday, July 25, 2 p.m.

Join Peter and Helen Rosenblum, the popular duo from Hinesburg, as they sing and strum from their large playlist of music that includes folk songs, romantic ballads, blues and rock. To register, call 802-425-6345. Free. Registration appreciated.

Photo discussion group Sunday, Aug. 10, 2-4 p.m.

Join a monthly photo discussion group, where photographers of all skill levels are welcome to share their work, ideas and experiences. Bring a photo and a story to share with the group. This is a great chance to engage in creative dialogue, get feedback and explore the impact of your images in a supportive and collaborative environment. For questions or more information, email Emily Cross at ecross@ecrossphoto.com.

Healthy cooking for one Friday, Aug. 15, 12-2 p.m.

Join Chef Shaun from Harbor Village Senior Communities for a fun and informative healthy-cooking class designed just for one. Learn simple, nutritious recipes perfect for solo dining with tips on portioning, freshness and flavor. Free. Registration required by calling 802-425-6345. Space is limited.

French conversation Mondays, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Parlez-vous français? We are an intermediate group of French speakers who meet weekly for French conversation. As the group grows, there may be opportunities to split according to skill levels. Questions? Email Roberta Whitmore at robertawhitmore27@gmail.com.

German conversation Tuesdays, 3-4 p.m.

Möchtest du dein Deutsch üben? Come join this group to meet other German speakers and practice your German. No agenda, just a casual conversation. All experience levels are welcome. Questions? Contact Dan York at dyork@Lodestar2.com.

Games

American-style mahjong Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m. & Wednesdays, starting June 11, 6 p.m.

Enjoy American mahjong in a welcoming

social setting, with opportunities to play twice each week. Beginners and experienced players alike are encouraged to join. Free. A great time to join the fun and get to know other players. Register for your first visit to Tuesday sessions in order to be included in the group texts. Email Suzanne Slesar at suzluna@madriver.com. Jane Krasnow, an experienced player, will be there to teach newcomers and guide play on Wednesdays. Open to all skill levels. Email jane.krasnow@gmail.com.

Shanghai mahjong Tuesdays, 12:45-3:45 p.m.

Join an informal mahjong gathering, open to all levels of experience. Whether you're new to Shanghai style or a seasoned player, you're welcome to join the group for casual play and fun conversation. Questions? Email Nan Mason at anne.mason@uvm.edu. Free.

Backgammon Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.

Backgammon is a tactical table game with a 5,000-year history. We welcome players at all levels. Free. To register, email at jonathanhart1@gmail.com.

Bridge Mondays, 12:30-4 p.m.

We play an intermediate level of duplicate bridge using the basic American Contract Bridge League conventions. Names are drawn for partners, and friendly games ensue. Those unfamiliar with duplicate bridge are welcome and paired with an experienced player to help for a few weeks of open dialogue training. We are always looking for new players who have basic bridge knowledge. Free. No registration required.

Exercise

Women's kayak trips Second & fourth Friday mornings

Join a community of active women who enjoy exploring our local lakes, ponds and rivers by kayak. Trips are planned based on water and weather conditions and are subject to change. To express interest, email Susan Hyde at susanfosterhyde@gmail.com to be added to the master list of paddlers. Details for each trip will be sent via email the week prior to the outing. Free. Registration required.

Gentle walk-hike Thursdays, July 24, 9 a.m.

Enjoy the beauty of nature. Come walk at a gentle pace with other seniors. The group will meet the fourth Thursday of the month for a congenial non-strenuous walk. Location to be determined based on conditions of the local walks. Meet at 9 a.m. in the foyer of the Charlotte Senior Center. Questions? Contact Penny Burman at 916-753-7279. Free. Registration required.

Let Your Yoga Dance pop-up Tuesday Aug. 19, 11 a.m.-noon

Join us for this free pop-up of Let Your Yoga Dance with Heather Preis. This class incorporates basic dance-like movements to music, guided by the body's energy system (chakras). It is a safe, compassionate, gentle movement practice, allowing for individual expression and nonjudgmental acceptance.



Photos by Lori York

The grill was fired up at the Senior Center for Monday lunch, thanks to volunteers Carol Strobeck, her son Matthew and Sue Foley.

This class is appropriate for all levels of fitness and abilities. Everyone can "let their yoga dance." Free. No registration required.

Tai chi-yang style short form Thursdays, 9:45-10:45 a.m.

Join Eliza Hammer for a tai chi class featuring the Yang international short form, the most popular style of tai chi practice. This form involves slow, continuous, soft circular movements coordinated with breathing. Regular practice helps improve balance, mental clarity, flexibility, stability, coordination and overall health. Practicing in a group setting is both uplifting and energizing. Eliza, a certified instructor, has studied with Dr. Lam, founder of the Tai Chi for Arthritis Association. Please note that this class is not for beginners. If you have questions about whether this class is appropriate for your skill level, you are warmly welcome to observe a class or reach out to Hammer at belizahammer@hotmail.com. \$10 per class. No registration required.

Bone Builders Mondays & Tuesdays, 9:45-10:45 a.m.; Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m.; & Fridays, 11 a.m.-noon

RSVP Bone Builders, a program of United Way of Northwest Vermont, is a no-impact, weight-training program designed to prevent and even reverse the negative effects of osteoporosis in older adults. Bone Builders consists of a warm-up, balance exercises, arm and leg exercises, and a cool down with stretching. Free. No registration required, but there is paperwork to complete for the RSVP Bone Builders program.

Meals

Menus are posted on the website: charlotteseniorcentervt.org.

Monday lunches

Served weekly. Lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or until the food runs out. Suggested lunch donation \$5. No registration required.



Junior and Fred Fischer install a new solar-powered light at the crosswalk at the corner of the Charlotte Senior Center

Senior center info:

The senior center offers programs for adults 50 and older from Charlotte and surrounding communities. Priority is given to seniors, but programs are open to adults of all ages. Interested in receiving a weekly reminder about what is happening? Sign up for the email newsletters at charlotteseniorcentervt.org. The "Week Ahead" email is sent out on Friday mornings with activities, lunch menus and special programs for the upcoming week.

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Write Ingredients

Perfect time of year for digging into watermelons

Susan Ohanian
Contributor

The Old Farmer’s Almanac tells us that the Dog Days begin July 3 and end Aug. 11, so we’re most definitely in them, and the volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center Monday Munch know that this is a perfect time for watermelon.

At the Melon Festival in Australia’s melon capital, Chinchilla, you can don a helmet, slip each foot into a hollowed-out watermelon, grab a rope and be pulled down a long tarp covered with smashed watermelons, until you belly flop, which is what usually happens to watermelon skiers.

Australia is a long way to go for watermelon excitement. There’s watermelon drama every June at the Watermelon Thump in Luling, Texas, where the Watermelon Spitting Contest is open for every age, from kids below 6 to seniors.

According to the rules, “height, weight or size of mouth shall not prevent any individual from competing. Official spitting seeds will be provided. No one will be permitted to use their own seed.” So far, the spitting record set in 1995 — 75 feet, 2 inches — still stands.

For those more interested in eating than spitting, The New York Times watermelon “search” produces 87 results, including chicken cooked inside a watermelon, tomato-watermelon chilled gazpacho soup and tomato and watermelon salad with shallots, rice, pancetta, white wine, parmigiano, garlic, peanuts and fish sauce.

Here’s a video showing a chicken cooked inside a watermelon: [youtube.com/watch?v=1C5EFAs14KM&t=65s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1C5EFAs14KM&t=65s).

President William McKinley liked tipsy watermelon, which calls for inserting 1/2 cup of rum into a plug dug into a 15-pound watermelon.

You can relax: Volunteer cooks at the Charlotte Senior Center offer watermelon unembellished — no rum, no chicken, no garlic, no peanuts, no fish sauce. Probably no spitting.



Photo by Jill Wellington from Pixabay

Worldwide, there are more than 1,000 varieties of watermelon. In the good old days, before USDA became associated with ugly politics (such as firing foreign contract workers), it funded a watermelon-breeding project in Charleston, S.C. One result was a large, oblong, light-green melon. Nearly 70 years later, Charleston grey is still known for its high yields, disease resistance and delicious taste.

The melons painted on ancient Egyptian limestone reliefs more than 5,000 years ago were hard and bitter but prized for their water. Historians tell us that Egyptian pharaohs knew they would need water for the long journey ahead in the afterlife, and thus we see those seeds and leaves on Egyptian tombs, including King Tut’s.

In 1673, the Jesuit explorer Father Marquette found watermelon being grown by American Indians in the Mississippi River Valley. A decade later, the Spanish brought melon seeds to today’s California.

Thomas Jefferson grew watermelons at Monticello, noting that even the best melons in Parisian markets couldn’t come close to those grown in Virginia. He concluded this was because in France “there is not sun enough to ripen them and give them flavor.”

Mark Twain noted, “The true Southern watermelon is a boon apart, and not to be mentioned with commoner things. It is chief of this world’s luxuries, king by grace of God over all the fruits of the earth. When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat.”

Henry David Thoreau had the reputation of growing the biggest and juiciest watermelons in Concord, Mass. On Aug. 29, 1839, Thoreau gave the first of what was to become an annual melon party for his neighbors.

As of 2023, China is the world’s leading producer of watermelons with 64 percent of the total. The United States ranks seventh, with the Sunshine State as the top producer.

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences says Florida farmers sold 800 million pounds of watermelon last year.

Decades ago, the most startling thing I saw, when I was sent to Japan to study their schools, was a cantaloupe in a Tokyo department store priced at \$100. I learned that in Japan melons have long been valued presentation items, a gift to impress. Of the more than 1,200 varieties of watermelon grown around the world, none is more expensive than the famous Densuke black watermelon grown in Hokkaido.

In March 2025, a 17.5-pound Densuke melon sold at auction for \$6,100. A spokesman for the Tohma Agricultural Cooperative in Hokkaido said that most department stores and supermarkets sell the melons for “a more modest \$188 to \$283.”

According to Guinness World Records, the world’s heaviest watermelon ever produced was grown in Sevierville, Tenn., and weighed in at 350.5 pounds. There’s no record of how it tasted or what happened to its seeds.

Food-inspired absurdity of the week: Inspired by Panera’s fan-favorite mac & cheese and bread bowl, this limited-edition duo from Holler and Glow and Panera introduces a new lip balm, a cozy, carb-inspired comfort to your beauty routine. According to the corporate sales pitch, each balm is infused with the unmistakable scents of this go-to Panera meal and crafted with Holler & Glow’s signature glossy, non-sticky formula with nourishing Vitamin E, sure to become your newest crave-worthy cosmetic.

(Susan Ohanian, recipient of the George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contribution to Honest and Clarity in Public Language, has written more than a dozen books about public schools and three other books: “Trump, Trump, Trump: The March of Folly,” “Trump Trump Trump: The Swan Song,” and “The Little Red Book of Trump Quotations.”)

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