Swimming holes in Vermont are renowned for their beauty and the opportunity for adventure. Thousands of people enjoy Vermont’s swimming holes every year and depend on them as public gathering spaces to have fun and relax during the short summers. During the pandemic, with public pools and beaches closed, Vermonters need swimming holes now more than ever. Yet public access is not guaranteed — use of these swimming holes is threatened by overuse, privatization, and mismanagement.

Public access to well-managed, safe, and fun swimming holes is essential for maintaining recreational opportunities for all Vermonters, regardless of race or socio-economic status. The Vermont River Conservancy is a non-profit land trust committed to protecting public access to Vermont’s rivers.

Unfortunately, as noted in recent news, Vermonters are seeing many swimming holes overrun by visitors, creating issues ranging from unsafe parking to excess litter. These conflicts can transform swimming holes from beloved community resources into disputed sites where public access is jeopardized. The VRC works with communities to install educational signage and lead volunteer stewardship opportunities at swimming holes. Engaging users in caring for their favorite swimming hole is critical for creating sites that are well-managed and publicly accessible. Swimming holes are a cherished part of Vermont’s landscape and connect people to a better understanding of watersheds, Vermont’s rivers and streams, and Vermont’s geology.

The Vermont River Conservancy is kicking off a swimming hole fundraising campaign this summer as part of its “A Swimming Hole for Every Town” initiative. Visitors will see informational displays when they stop at nearby gas stations and stores on their way to or from swimming holes. Those displays will have instructions on how to send a phone text to donate to the VRC. Visitors will also see signs asking for donations to the VRC at the swimming holes.

There are no fees to use swimming holes, but donations are critical to help the VRC carefully manage these sites so that all Vermonters may enjoy them. “While swimming holes are free to visit, the work to protect public access to these special places takes time and resources,” says Vermont River Conservancy Development & Outreach Director Richarda Ericson, “Vermont River Conservancy is committed to ensuring Vermonters and visitors alike can access the incredible places along our rivers, but we rely strongly on visitor etiquette, community partnerships, and donations to support this important work.”

Highlights of the swimming hole projects are a one-mile
A group of bicycle enthusiasts set the wheels in motion to put a pump track at the end of Cummings Street. A pump track is a closed circuit, curvy dirt track for bicycle riding. John Hollar, on behalf of the Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association, filed an application on April 30, 2020 for building such a track at a vacant lot across from 23 Cummings Street and adjacent to a multi-use trail. The project is estimated to cost around $7,000.

The property is owned by the City of Montpelier, and City Manager William Fraser signed off on the application May 5.

A letter describing the project submitted in September 2019 states, “The Montpelier Area Bike Association (MAMBA) is proposing to construct a bicycle pump track on a City-owned lot on Cummings Street. A pump track is a circuit of rollers, banked turns, and features designed to be ridden completely by riders ‘pumping’ — generating momentum by up and down body movements.”

The purpose is to create recreational activity for youths. However, the letter states people of all ages will be able to use the track. It will be built with clean soil in a 50-by-80-foot area. Building the track would require adding about 150 yards of soil and adding 10 parking spaces. The location is “ideal” because it is near the North Branch, and the multi-use hiking/biking trail. It is also a short distance from the Elm Street recreational field.

Hollar sent a memo to the Development Review Board on June 12, 2020 to supplement the earlier information. For one thing, putting in a pump track would not conflict with River Hazard Area regulations because it does not “increase the exterior dimensions of any structure.” No structure is included in the application, and no structures currently exist on the site.

Additionally, the project can meet a “no fill” requirement, Hollar wrote. The group will also have to request a waiver for developing within a wetlands or vernal pool buffer to convince the board the pump track “shall not have an undue adverse impact on the wetland or vernal pool.” There is a vernal pool on the opposite side of Cummings Street, next to an apartment complex.

Shannon Morrison, wetlands ecologist, wrote in a letter dated June 8 recommending the group put up a buffer demarcation berm or fence 50 feet from the wetland area. She also suggested they contact the Department of Public Works, because the spot had been used to store snow after snow removal. However, city officials said that spot hasn’t been used to dump snow for several years.

The Design Review Board will discuss the project during their meeting July 20. Those who want to hear more or weigh in on the matter are encouraged to participate. From the montpelier-vt.org website:

Public participation by remote means highly encouraged:
https://zoom.us/j/97517685798?pwd=MmhyM1d6mFMBjRLZXEyYVRRdWpDQT09
Meeting ID: 975 1768 5798
Password: 325564
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
Montpelier Reappraisal Contract Awarded

Montpelier has awarded a $260,000 contract to conduct a reappraisal to New England Municipal Consultants, the same firm that conducted the city’s last reappraisal in 2010. The full reappraisal, in which the firm will attempt to visit every property in Montpelier, will start late in 2021 or early 2022 and is set to be completed by June 2023.

Rising property values are expected to push the city’s level of appraisals compared with fair market values this year down below 85 percent, the point at which the state requires reappraisals. City Manager Bill Fraser noted that residential property values have been soaring, but he wondered how commercial properties — which are valued based on a building’s income — are faring in light of the pandemic.

If residential property appraisals go up more than commercial property appraisals, that could once again shift more of the property tax burden onto residential properties, Fraser noted. “But perhaps the situation will have changed by the time of the reappraisal,” he added.

Parking Meter Fees to be Reinstituted August 1

We’ve gotten used to not paying for parking since March. Thank you, Montpelier! But come August, it’s time to get out the quarters again (or debit card for the smart meters). From the last City Manager’s report: “We will likely restart meter-regulated parking on or around August 1. This would come with an early re-education period, waived fees for parklets, and, potentially, free or reduced price parking in lots. We are also thinking about having more 15-minute spaces to accommodate take out and curbside.” All good things come to an end.

Then & Now

American Legion Post No. 3 at 21 Main Street is housed in one of the few wood frame buildings remaining downtown. It probably dates from just after the Montpelier fire of 1875 that flattened this area of the city. In this 1915 photograph, P.J. Blanchard’s harness shop and shoe repair business is on the left side of the building, and an unidentified food market is on the right. The side wall of the Lawrence Block, destroyed by fire in 1924, can be seen on the left, and the Hyde Building, still standing today, is on the right. Today, the building is much changed, but the placement of the windows and doors hint at the original structure under its aluminum siding and vertical board facade.

Glorious summer days! Too hot, too dry? Wrightsville Beach is quiet and lovely in early morning and late afternoon. The rivers and streams are low but still cool and inviting. Listen to the birds, float on your back and admire the clouds, dig in the sand; take a picnic. And give a prayer for the Rain Gods. When it rains, know that the earth is soaking it up, the underground reservoirs and lakes are re-charging.

Nature Watch

Artwork and Words by Nona Estrin

Historic photos courtesy of Vermont Historical Society; Captions and modern photos by Paul Carnahan.

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Montpelier Budget Cut By 10 Percent, Road Work Delayed

By Phil Dodd

Facing a projected significant downturn in revenues as a result of the pandemic, the Montpelier City Council has adopted a “crisis” budget for the fiscal year started July 1 that cuts spending by $1.4 million, which is almost 10 percent of the city’s original fiscal year 2021 budget of $14.9 million, according to City Manager Bill Fraser.

Fraser said the city’s property tax rate and property tax revenues for this fiscal year should be about the same as planned. But other revenue sources — especially parking fees, program fees, PILOT funding, and local option tax revenues — could drop by as much as $1.4 million, he projected.

The major cuts enacted include a hiring freeze ($441,603), delays in roadwork ($366,470), and delays in equipment and vehicle purchases ($336,500). Other cuts include skipping a cost-of-living increase for most city employees ($75,472) and cutting appropriations by 25 percent to the Montpelier Development Corporation, the Arts Fund, the Housing Trust Fund, and the Homelessness Task force. The Ash Borer program is being cut by 20 percent.

Fraser said the City Council plans to review the budget quarterly and see if additional spending can be added back or more cuts are necessary. “The next review will come in October,” he said. He noted that the new budget is “not sustainable” in the long term.

Some planned roadwork will still occur this summer, while other jobs are being delayed. Construction and utility work will continue on Clarendon, Redstone, and Jordan with paving later this summer, according to Kurt Motyka, Deputy Director of Public Works. But work on Dewey, Dwinell, and Cummings has been postponed.

A decision to postpone work on Westwood was recently made, Motyka said. Those resources will instead be used to repave the Bailey Street Bridge and one lane on Memorial Drive. Reconstruction on Taylor Street is expected to start soon, he added.

Asked about East State Street, one of the bumpier major roads in Montpelier, Motyka said that will be a massive project including water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure. Preliminary engineering on the project is getting underway, but the start date could depend on the availability of state funding. “It’s unlikely but possible the work on East State Street could begin next year,” he said.

Some persistent potholes in Montpelier are now being filled after the return July 1 of 10 furloughed workers, including some Public Works employees. The final 15 furloughed city workers will return to employment August 1 under the new city budget.

The furloughs, which started earlier this spring, saved the city about $47,000 in fiscal year 2020 — which ended June 30 and is expected to come out close to being in balance — and will save about $25,000 in the FY2021 budget.

Fraser said the city will be filling some open positions in Public Works in the fall. “Winter will return and people will expect the roads to be plowed,” he said.

Swimming Holes

Continued from page 1

long trail along the North Branch of the Winooski River in Worcester and Elmore — a pristine headwaters section complete with seven cascading waterfalls and swimming holes, hence the trail name ‘North Branch Cascades.’ The conservancy has also protected public access to Bolton Potholes in Bolton, a geologically stunning swimming hole whose history has been tarnished by overuse and safety issues. After a summer of increased management, signage, education, and extensive work with the local community, the conservancy is seeing significant improvements at this site.

The Vermont River Conservancy collaborated with the town of Johnson to protect Journey’s End and Beard Recreation Park, two swimming holes that exemplify how community support and visitor etiquette and education can create a well-managed community resource.

For more information on Vermont River Conservancy-protected swimming holes, and visiting swimming holes during these times of COVID-19, please visit www.vermontriverconservancy.org.

The Vermont River Conservancy is a Montpelier-based non-profit that works to protect and preserve important land along Vermont waters such as waterfalls, gorges, swimming holes, wetlands, river and lake shores, and islands. Information is available at www.vermontriverconservancy.org or by calling the VRC at (802) 229-0820.
In a May 8th letter of this year, well-meaning would-be rescuers Jamie and Maria Duggan wrote a letter to the City Council regretfully bowing out. “Dear City Council Members, It is with regret we must inform you of our intent to withdraw our proposal to start a nonprofit that would seek to take over ownership of the property at 5 Home Farm Way in Montpelier. … Based on advice and guidance from our legal counsel, as well as real estate and development mentors, we were not able to identify a prudent path to ownership.” They went on to describe how their attempts to work out a deal with the other parties involved were unsuccessful. However, they said they would help if others could find a way to fix up the property and make it work in hopes of preserving the building.

So why doesn’t the city just sell it by tax sale? Food Works at Two Rivers was a nonprofit organization and was not on the tax rolls, explained City Manager Bill Fraser, so no taxes were owed on it. However, Fraser said the property is now back on the tax rolls, since it is no longer owned by a nonprofit organization.

Meanwhile, meeting participant Elizabeth Parker vowed to put together a plan to fund the rescue of the building and start a community program. City Council members casually agreed by thumb signal toward the end of the meeting to keep monitoring the situation as observers rather than participants and step in should imminent danger arise.

5 Home Farm Way. Photo by Carla Occaso.
A Message From City Hall

This page was paid for by the City of Montpelier.

Pandemic and Police

By William Fraser, City Manager

As this is published, we’ll all be at the beginning of our 18th week of various pandemic-related measures with the Governor's state of emergency extended until July 15th. The City is now facing a projected $1.4 million revenue shortfall for the FY21 budget. The City Council was presented with a staff proposal to address this situation, which represents about 10 percent of the overall budget.

What does this mean? It means that the city is not raising taxes or rates to make up for any shortfall. It means that some services and programs may not function at full capacity. It means that some planned infrastructure projects won’t happen this summer. Public safety services will remain at near full capacity.

Projected reductions in PILOT, local options taxes, ambulance fees, state highway aid, license fees, and permits total $775,000. Additional potential carry-over pressure from FY20 and program user fees total $367,500. Finally, projected parking revenue loss is $265,220. All of this adds up to $1,408,620. These numbers, of course, are subject to change based on a wide variety of factors including the economy, decisions of the legislature, or changes in COVID-19 operating guidance.

What is being cut? Equipment from Police, DPW, Fire/EMS/Rec, Recreation, and Cemetery is being delayed for a total of $336,500. Personnel costs including hiring freeze or position reductions, delayed/elimi-

nated pay increases, and furlough extensions for a total of $572,075. Capital projects delayed including Cummings Street water/sew

er, the Woodstock water/steam plant, Hubbard Street retaining wall, and Barre Street and Loomis Street sectional repairs for $366,470. Operations reductions throughout various departments for $60,350. Appropriations to community groups including the Montpelier Development Corporation, the Montpelier Arts Committee, the Housing Trust Fund, the Homelessness Task Force, and the cancelled July 3 celebration totaling $73,250. In all these budget reductions represent $1,408,645.

Are these cuts permanent? They are not intended to be. Revenues will be reviewed on a quarterly basis. If receipts are better than projected we will add things back in. Many of the projects and equipment could be done in the second half of the fiscal year (January to June of 2021). Staff will be brought back gradually.

The real challenge will be the FY22 budget. By November and December we should all have a better idea of how the pandemic is playing out. Are we moving toward some degree of normalcy or are we looking at permanent changes in our services and local expectations?

Another community impact is the City Council’s emergency order requiring face masks in all public indoor locations. This has been mostly successful. We remain dis-

appointed in the handful of individuals and businesses who have chosen noncompliance.

The Council enacted three measures de-

signed to assist downtown businesses. One is allowing use of sidewalks for restaurant seating or merchandise display (as long as five feet of usable sidewalk space remains), the second is allowing an unlimited amount of parking spaces for parkers during 2020 with an accelerated approval process, and the third is blocking one side of Langdon Street to allow expanded seating and commerce in the street.

Parking is another area of conversation. The city eliminated all parking fees and fines (except for accessible spaces, fire lanes/ hydrants, etc.) in March. With businesses reopening, parking spaces are starting to fill and many by the same vehicles all day long. We will likely restart meter regulated parking on or around August 1. This would come with an early re-education period, waived fees for parkers, and, potentially, free or reduced price parking in lots. We are also thinking about having more 15-minute spaces to accommodate take out and curbside.

Policing

Discussions about the role of the Police in Montpelier, in Vermont, and in the country have continued. The City Council has set aside their meeting of August 26 to talk through some of the many concerns and questions people have raised.

Police Chief Brian Petre has been holding a series of community conversations, some in person and some on line. He seeks to hear from Montpelier residents about their impressions of the Montpelier Police Department. He has also been answering questions about his goals and vision for the department, his philosophy on policing, and his opinions on controversial issues.

In preparation for the meeting on August 26, here is some basic information oriented around requests made to the City Council. I’ll include more in the August edition of The Bridge. These comments are mine and may not reflect those of the City Council.

— Remove police officers from the Montpelier school system. This will be, ultimately, a School Board decision. One discussion was already held on July 1. It will be important to understand the purpose and goals of the School Resource Officer position.

The City and Police department wel-

come the conversation and will provide any information that is helpful to the process.

— Permanently reduce the num-

ber of police officers immediately, starting with those who have used excessive force. Montpelier has one of the smallest departments (17 sworn officers) for a city of our size and activity level. Other than particular events, the city usually has only 2–4 patrol personnel on duty at any given time. The City has as many firefighters as police officers. No Montpelier officers have been found to have used excessive force.

— Pass a resolution banning the proc-

urement of military equipment and surveillance technology. The MPD has not requested or received any military equip-

ment from the Department of Defense, more specifically the 1033 program, in the last 15 years. The city does not use military technol-

ogy or surveillance. We use cruiser videos to record interactions and incidents. There is a state and national push for body-worn cameras, which the City and MPD support.

— Disarm the police. As long as guns are readily available in Vermont and the U.S., police officers will be called into danger-

ous situations. Obviously guns and other tools are not needed in most of the interactions that officers have. However, the occurrence of violent calls and necessary response is completely unpredictable.

— Divert funding from the dispro-

portionately large police budget into the under-funded, volunteer-based Montpelier Community Justice Cen-

ter. The department’s budget is not dispro-

portionately large. The Community Justice Center is a state-funded program. We fully agree that the state should increase funding for this and all other social service programs (see graph at left).

— Arrange for budget shortfall re-

sulting from COVID-19 to come ex-

clusively out of police budget, as not to disrupt other services that the City provides. The FY20 and FY21 COVID-related budget adjustments have already been made as discussed earlier. The police department shifted funding for one officer to a state task force and delayed fund-

ing for a new cruiser.

— Police unions keep officers from facing consequences. Decertify and disband the police union and do not enter into any further collective bargaining agreements with organ-

izations that represent the police.

A municipal employer may not decertify a police union on its own. Also, the Municipal Employer is not allowed to a municipal employer to file a petition to de-

certify a union. A municipal employer is re-

quired to bargain in good faith with a union representing employees with the intent to enter into a collective bargaining agreement. If the Labor Relations Board determines that an employer violates the duty to bargain in good faith, the Board concludes that an em-

ployer commits an unfair labor practice and orders an appropriate remedy.

— Work toward creating new struc-

tures of justice, emergency re-

sponse, and conflict resolution with the ultimate goal of abolishing the police. The City and MPD absolutely sup-

port additional resources for mental health services, social workers, alcohol/drug addiction counseling, domestic violence, poverty prevention, homelessness services, housing, and the like.

Thank you for reading this article and for your interest in Montpelier City Government. Please contact me at wfraser@montpelier vt. org or 802-223-9502 with any questions or comments.
Food Scraps Banned from Trash

By Carl Etnier

The final phase of Vermont’s 2012 Universal Recycling Law went into effect on July 1, and now all food scraps are banned from the trash. Properly sorted food scraps are to be composted, either on site or elsewhere.

The food scrap prohibition has been phased in since 2014, when it applied to institutions generating more than two tons per week of food scraps. Each year through 2017, it applied to smaller and smaller amounts of food waste. The last previous milestone was July 1, 2017, when it encompassed generators of more than 18 tons/year, roughly 700 pounds per week. Now it applies to everyone, including households.

The Universal Recycling Law was intended, in part, to extend the useful life of Vermont’s one permitted landfill, in Coventry, by reducing how much is sent to the landfill. It also targets other benefits.

Food scraps in landfills, for example, generate methane, which is roughly 80 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over the short term. While some of the methane can be captured and used to generate electricity, as Washington Electric Co-op does at Coventry, a significant amount leaks into the atmosphere, even at landfills actively capturing methane. The Environmental Protection Agency says landfills constitute the third-largest source of methane emissions in the U.S. from human-related sources.

Food scraps that are composted generate — compost! For those who have the space, backyard composting can be done in homemade compost bins or purchased ones — and the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District website (cvswmd.org) has both plans for making your own and a page for ordering commercial compost equipment at a discount.

All transfer stations are now accepting food scraps, as are other places, including Vermont Compost and Dog River Farm in Montpelier, and Perfect Circle Farm in Berlin. Both Vermont Compost and Earthgirl Composting offer residential curbside compost pickup. Just remember to keep everything that’s not food scraps out of the compost — plastic bags and even the little plastic stickers on fruits and vegetables cause problems for composters.

More information, including tips on composting in bear country, is available at cvswmd.org and dec.vermont.gov.
A general store in one of Vermont's most idyllic villages has recently opened up for customers again now that the coronavirus infection rate has subsided to safer levels. The virus pandemic actually gave business a boost as locals stayed home, and, not wanting to venture to downtown Montpelier, they relied on the store to get food and supplies.

Situated between the historic Kents Corner Tavern and the summer playground of Curtis Pond, the Maple Corner Community Store became, in recent years, a local music attraction. Its Whammy Bar became known to rock out all year long with such musical acts as Liz Beatty and the Lab Rats, the Larksups, the Shanty Rats, Rust Bucket, and Groove Philter.

But all that stopped with the COVID-19 pandemic. The store shut down for in-person shoppers on March 5, but with curbside pick-up, business actually picked up, said store manager Anne Marie Shea.

“We actually got busier for a while,” Shea said. “We quadrupled our produce section. Our bottom line hasn’t changed a lot.” Shea said they were lucky to not have to lay off any employees, but noted some employees stopped working because of fears of catching the novel coronavirus. But since the infection rate has gone down, business has gone down. “People are less scared. They are going to Montpelier,” Shea said. “It’s time to reopen.”

And with reopening, new rules are in place for in-person shopping. Masks are required; no entry if you have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, chills, cough, loss of taste and smell); no entry if you have been outside of Vermont for any reason in the past 14 days; no more than three customers in the store and one in the post office at any given time; one-way path through the store with arrows on the floor; and stand six feet apart from people, according to maplecornercommunitystore.org.

The enormous and unexpected changes brought on by Gov. Phil Scott’s “Stay Home” order hit the store just a few months after former owners Artie and Nancy Toulis sold it to a community cooperative in December 2019. Shea was part of a group who helped organize the community cooperative that bought the store by purchasing individual $500 shares. “It is a corporation. It is owned by 200 people,” Shea said, adding that it took about six months to scrape the money together. They bought it December 16, and opened by December 19.

But then came the lockdown, which dealt an unexpectedly positive blow. It brought in more local business than ever. So now, thanks to investment by a group of determined citizens, it looks like the community store will stay open through good times and bad.
Runners Find Virtual Motivation

by J. Gregory Gerdel

For runners, “virtual” runs and races do not take the running out of the experience. But they do transcend the difficulty of physical distancing in the traditional event format by dramatically spreading the start time over several weeks or months.

For runners of all types, talent, and ambition, a key strategy for motivation has long been preparation for a race date several weeks or months in the future. When the challenge of sustaining that motivation in a year when the arrival of a pandemic erased the club’s long-standing race schedule, Central Vermont Runners has created a virtual solution to keep runners running.

Manny Sainz, who was elected Central Vermont Runners Club president in March, abruptly found himself leading an organization the events for which could not be held under the State of Vermont guidelines established to limit the spread of COVID-19. “The Mutt Strut in April was the first cancelled, then the Adamant Half-Marathon, which was scheduled for May,” Sainz said.

In April, the Central Vermont Runners Club race committee came up with a rescheduling plan for the Spring, an eight-week series of virtual events where each runner could select among several race distances and record and report their time running when and wherever they chose. The club’s Social Distance Virtual Run Series was a hit. “We had 75 people sign up immediately,” Sainz noted. A total of 112 runners reported 595 events over the eight weeks of the initial series, with an average of 35 runners reporting each week.

In addition, Sainz pointed out, the Spring Series raised $720 for the Vermont Food Bank through sales of a special Central Vermont Runners hat and direct donations.

A second round of virtual races is now underway. The race committee met again in early June and devised the Central Vermont Runners 2020 Participation Race Series, which incorporates the courses of nine events that usually occur between June and Labor Day weekend. “The objective was to keep the spirit of these events alive while meeting the guidelines of our insurer [Road Runners Club of America] and of the State of Vermont.” Sainz said.

The club’s website provides a map of each course, directions to the start line, and how to report your results. Registration closes on August 1. To participate, “Run any or all of the series races between June 21 and September 6. You can run the races in any order. Enter your time in the system to be eligible for prizes. Prizes are awarded randomly; the more races you’ve run the greater your chance of winning a prize.”

The mapped courses include:
- Paul Mailman 10 Miler
- Paul Mailman 5K
- Adamant Half-Marathon
- Barre Town Spring Run 5K
- Capital City Stampede 10K
- Montpelier Mile
- Bear Swamp Run 5.7 Miles
- Barre Heritage 5K Trail Race
- Berlin Pond 5 Miler
- Northfield 5K

Sainz noted his appreciation of the ingenuity that went into creating both virtual series. Contributors include Sal Acosta, Central Vermont Runners vice president, and the members of the race committee: Andy Shuford, Shannon Sablembier, Donna Smyers, and Jeff Prescott.
Police Beat
Police Dealt with Hot Cats, Fireworks, and Human Despair

Items selected from the Montpelier Police Department Media Log, June 29 – July 5. The Bridge tried to stick as closely to original wording as possible, but sometimes edited for clarity.

July 5
Police were called about cats left in a vehicle. The felines were purrfectly fine.
Someone asked police to check the welfare of a subject sitting at the end of the Main Street Bridge.
A child’s scooter was found at Pitkin Court.
Someone reported a fox on Elm Street.

July 4
Police issued a ‘No Trespass’ issue after someone stole something from a store on Memorial Drive.
A bear was reportedly in Blanchard Park.
32-year-old Ethan Kvasnak of Northfield was arrested for DUI, attempting to elude, resisting arrest, and retail theft.
Police received multiple complaints of fireworks being set off, including on Barre Street, Main Street, and River Street.
Someone called to complain of excessive barking on College Street. Police notified the dog owner who quieted the dog.
A suicide was reported on Greenwood Terrace.

July 3
A report was received of fireworks being set off. The suspect was caught in the act and was found to not have a fireworks permit. He turned over his remaining fireworks and was warned for the offense.
An officer checked on a vehicle stopped on the shoulder of the roadway at Dog River Road. Determined to be persons working on beekeeping operation adjacent to roadway.
A bear was in the roadway on Gallison Hill Road at Cabot Creamery. It was not there when police arrived.

July 2
A car ran into a deer on Elm Street at Cummings Street.
Someone reported noncompliance of a Montpelier business not following Governor’s executive Stay Safe order regarding mask wearing.
Someone reported a business on Memorial Drive not following the Governor’s Stay Safe executive order regarding wearing masks.

July 1
Police took a person into protective custody for intoxication near Taylor Street on the bike path following a report of assault.
A person was reportedly at the pocket park at Taylor Street with their pants falling down.
A report came in of “transients periodically using a public space to urinate and defecate.”
Patrols of the area will continue.
Someone reported a vehicle stolen on State Street.

June 30
Chief Facos was given a retirement ceremony at National Life.
Police got a report of a male harassing business owners on Main Street.
Someone reported noncompliance of the Governor’s Stay Safe order regarding mask wearing in public business.
Someone reported a dog at large at Bishop Hall on College Street. The owners were counseled and a first offense letter provided by mail.

June 29
Several reports of noncompliance of the Governor’s Stay Safe executive order came into the PD.
Someone reported an individual urinating on the side of a building on Main Street.

“He focuses on the low hanging marketing fruit while keeping an eye on the broader marketing picture. He has guided me to develop quality content for my clients that work well for both marketing my business and adding value to my clients.”
— Irvin Eisenberg, Resilience Of
Scudder Parker: A Poet Connected to People and the Earth

by George Longenecker

When I interviewed Scudder Parker of Middlesex about his new book, "Safe as Lightning," the conversation ranged far and wide. That's appropriate, for his poetry covers such a breadth of topics. It's writing rooted in the soil of Vermont, rich in imagery, for Parker is a careful observer. Illustrations by Adelaide Tyrol enhance the poetry.

He's been a minister, state senator, gubernatorial candidate, and renewable energy consultant. He's a devoted father and grandfather. He's proud of the gardens he and his wife Susan Sussman have cultivated. All of this comes out in his poetry. When we spoke, it was clear that he writes with purpose and revises with a clear sense of craft. His poems take us from his childhood in the 1950s, back when his parents farmed in North Danville, to the present.

In our interview, Parker said how he "Became a farm boy" and "fell in love with the land." He likes his poetry to be "A conversation with the spirit and creatures." Both family reminiscence and his keen observation of Vermont are clear in the poem "Moose Bog." "The blue-headed vireo pokes its thread of song/ between shirt after/ shirt, the wheat we wear, the wheat/ that will sustain us. Down on my knees scrubbing today's soil from the floor, / that cloth I use / it is the sudden thing I trust." In "Chamois Shirt" the poet is both pragmatic and contemplative. "But infinity is always there/ beneath, between shirt after/ shirt/ Not a terrifying place for her. She lives in a landscape without courtesy./ It's not a terrifying place for her/ She knows her husband's voice is gone./ Her grandson visits, talks summers at the farm/... She has not spoken in weeks./ As he walks out the door she says 'thankyou'/ in the voice he grew up with." About the title poem, he says: "Lightning is what's real. We pay more attention to the thunder." He goes on to say that the poet's "... job is not to hide from reality." He spoke of the many funerals he's conducted. "If we don't deal with reality." He said "We stopped in Island Pond for coffee...This is where my father started preaching/ sixty years ago...The once thriving village was collapsing like a pumpkin in November."

Like his father, Scudder Parker became a minister. He served churches in East St. Johnsbury and lower Waterford for 20 years. I asked him to compare prayer and poetry. "Poetry works well when it has the honesty of good prayer... that takes the time to let the spirit reflect back to you." In "The Poem of the World" he says "The poem of the world wants me to wake/ in my own body; it is astonished I might let these supple bones grow brittle. / it is the sudden thing I trust." In "Chamois Shirt" the poet is both pragmatic and contemplative. "But infinity is always there/ beneath, between shirt after/ shirt, the wheat we wear, the wheat/ that will sustain us. Down on my knees scrubbing today's soil from the floor, / that cloth I use / it is the sudden thing I trust." In "Chamois Shirt" the poet is both pragmatic and contemplative. "But infinity is always there/ beneath, between shirt after/ shirt/ It's not a terrifying place for her. She lives in a landscape without courtesy./ It's not a terrifying place for her/ She knows her husband's voice is gone./ Her grandson visits, talks summers at the farm/... She has not spoken in weeks./ As he walks out the door she says 'thankyou'/ in the voice he grew up with." About the title poem, he says: "Lightning is what's real. We pay more attention to the thunder." He goes on to say that the poet's "... job is not to hide from reality." He spoke of the many funerals he's conducted. "If we don't deal with sadness, we miss the wonder and beauty of life." In "Elms" he speaks of the death of trees and of personal loss. "Or should I just admit/how much I miss them." I asked him if there were similarities between crafting legislation as a senator and committee chair and writing poetry. "Being responsive...making it an investigatory forum." In "Art of the Poem" he says "I imagine myself a cook." In 2006 Parker won the Democratic gubernatorial primary but lost the general election. I asked if he'd rather have been governor or have been a published poet. He would only say he has no regrets. "I'll take the way things happen." To read his poems it's clear he's happy with the way things have happened, but does not avoid life's sadness and irony. This is skillfully crafted verse, worthy of comparison with the best poets.

The Poem of the World


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Brand New Berlin Condos!

Two sparkling condos at Mansfield Lane feature a large open living room, dining area and kitchen. The living room end wall is enhanced with a large window array. The kitchen is finished with granite countertops, tile backsplash and stainless appliances. Direct entry accesses the large covered rear porch and yard. Two nicely sized bedrooms and two full bathrooms plus an alcove with laundry closet are all part of this one level design. The lower level includes an oversized garage with extra room for storage or shop space. An efficient propane fired boiler provides heat and hot water for this home. Nicely detailed throughout, these homes are designed for comfortable efficient living with state-of-the-art systems. The location is most convenient. One first floor and the other second floor, ready to move in. $250,000 and $255,000

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Wednesday, July 15
Mood Disorders Support Group: Via Zoom. Peer and professionally led support for people coping with mood disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, seasonal affective disorder, postpartum depression, dysthymia, and more. We share our experience, strength, and hope to support each other on our mental health journey. Every Wed. 4–5 pm. Free. For more information and meeting code, contact Rosanne at 917-1959 or roxanne@rosanne.info

Friday, July 17
The Real McCoy. Breathtaking stunts and lighting fast wit will have everyone in the family cheering for this show full of awe and laughs. Entrance to the event will be limited to 65. Spread out on the lawn or sit on the patio. 6:30 pm. The Miss Hungry food truck will be on site 4–8 pm. Highland Center for the Arts, 2875 Hardwick St., Greensboro. Reserve your free ticket at highlandartsvt.org

Wednesday, July 22
Mood Disorders Support Group: Via Zoom. See event listing under July 15.

Saturday, July 25
Counterpoint Viewing Party. Via YouTube Live, we’ll show footage of recent performances and videos that put inspiring images to some of our favorite songs. Counterpoint singers will reminisce about our past, talk about the future, and answer your questions! 7 pm. youtube.com/user/natlewvt/featured

Sunday, July 26
Brunch with Andrew Koehler. Join us on the patio for brunch and a concert of improvised jazz standards, and modern and familiar tunes. 10 am–1 pm. Highland Center for the Arts, 2875 Hardwick St., Greensboro. Reserve your free ticket at highlandartsvt.org

Wednesday, August 5
Mood Disorders Support Group: Via Zoom. See event listing under July 15.

Thursday, August 6
Don’t Flush That!: a Free Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District Webinar. 2 pm. Register: cvswmd.org/workshop-registration.html

Saturday, August 8
Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance and Central Vermont Runners Virtual Suffrage 5K Scramble. Aug. 8–15. Individuals, friends, organizations, clubs, and corporations are invited to form groups to commemorate the Women’s Suffrage Centennial. Participants will run or walk the 5K (3.11 miles) route of their choice, at any interval and at any pace, between the 8th and the 15th in a “Votes for Women/Votes for All” sash and submit photos to celebrate their accomplishment. $20. For more info: http://cvrunners.org/cvr-races/suffrage-scramble/ Register: https://www.letsdothis.com/us/e/suffrage-scramble-5k-virtual-event-187864

Sunday, August 9
Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance and Central Vermont Runners Virtual Suffrage 5K Scramble. See event description under Aug. 8

I’d appreciate your vote.

Lake Champlain Chocolates and Vermont Creamery are coming together for the coolest cause - a limited edition Benefit Batch of delectable Lake Champlain Chocolate Ice Cream made with Vermont Creamery’s richly indulgent, rich cream. We will partner up for a pop-up Ice Cream Sale on July 25 at the Montpellier Farmer’s Market. 100% of the proceeds from our Benefit Batch will be donated to the Vermont Food Bank.

WHO: Vermont Creamery and Lake Champlain Chocolates
WHAT: A pop-up Ice Cream Sale to help families impacted by COVID-19
WHEN: July 25, 2020, 9AM-1PM
WHERE: Montpellier Farmer’s Market, 2 Taylor Street, Montpellier, Vermont.
**ART EXHIBITS**

**Through July 25:** Caroline Tavelli-Abar, *Moments of Joy.* These works share pieces of the artist’s journey when mental health became a priority and healing necessary. Axel’s Gallery, 5 Stowe St., Waterbury. axelsgallery.com

**Through August 2:** Glen Coburn Hutcheson, *Boxers and Friends.* In Hutcheson’s series of sculptures, he makes abstract forms out of starched clothing — often his own discarded T-shirts and boxers. The forms twist, grow, and embody the same sense of spontaneity as his earlier series of colorful squiggle paintings. Virtual artist talk: July 21, 7 pm. The Front Gallery, 6 Barre St., Montpelier. In-person viewing by appointment. For more info and Zoom invitation: thefrontvt.com/event/glen-coburn-hutcheson-boxers-and-friends/


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**EVENTS**

**Monday, August 10**
Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance and Central Vermont Runners Virtual Suffrage 5K Scramble. See event description under Aug. 8.

**Tuesday, August 11**
Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance and Central Vermont Runners Virtual Suffrage 5K Scramble. See event description under Aug. 8.

You can submit listings for free events and arts-related events via our online form, or email to calendar@montpelierbridge.com.
August 11 is the primary election day. Contact your city or town clerk for information on early voting. Early voting runs from June 27 through August 10 by absentee ballot. Voter registration deadline is Friday, August 7.

Qualified candidates for local countywide and legislative positions from the secretary of state’s website by name, party, town:

**Washington County Senate Candidates**
- Ken Alger (R), Barre Town
- Ann Cummings (D), Montpelier
- Theo Kennedy (D), Middlesex
- Andrew Perchlik (D), Montpelier
- Anthony Pollina (D), Middlesex
- Dawnmarie Tomasi (R), Barre Town

**Washington County Representatives**
- Gordon Beck (D), Northfield
- Anne Donahue (R), Northfield
- Kenneth Goslant (R), Northfield
- Robert “Rob” Lehmer (D), Berlin
- Denise MacMartin (D), Northfield

**Washington 2**
- Rob LaClair (R), Barre Town
- Francis “Topper” McFauhn, (R), Barre Town

**Washington 3**
- Peter D. Anthony (D), Barre City
- Karen Lauzon (R), Barre City

**Washington 4**
- John Steinman (R), Barre City
- Tommy Waltz (D), Barre City

**Washington 5**
- Kimberly Jessup (D), Middlesex

**Washington 6**
- Janet Ancel (D), Middlesex

**Washington 7**
- Kari Dolan (D), Waitsfield
- Maxine Grad (D), Moretown

**Washington-Chittenden**
- Brock Codere (R), Waterbury
- Thomas Stevens (D), Waterbury
- Theresa Wood (D), Waterbury

**Other candidates for statewide positions:**

**Representative to U.S. Congress:**
- Miriam Berry (R), Essex
- Chris Brimmer (P), Ryegate
- Ralph “Carcajou” Corbo (D), Wallingford
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- Jimmy Rodriguez (R), Montpelier
- Justin Tuthill (R), Pomfret
- Anya Tynio (R), Charleston
- Peter Welch (D), Norwich

**Governor:**
- Douglas Cavett (R), Milton
- Ralph “Carcajou” Corbo (D), Wallingford
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester

**Lieutenant Governor**
- Tim Ashe (D), Burlington
- Dara Colton, Jr. (R), Sharon
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- Molly Gray (D), Barre Town
- Meg Hansen (R), Manchester
- Jim Hogue (R), Calais
- Debbie Ingram (D), Williston
- Scott Milne (R), Pomfret
- Dwayne Tucker (R), Barre Town
- Brenda Siegel (D), Newfane

**Secretary of State**
- Jim Condos (D), Montpelier
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- H. Brooke Paige (R), Washington

**Auditor of Accounts**
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- Doug Hoffer (D), Burlington
- Linda Joy Sullivan (D), Dorset

**State Treasurer**
- Carolyn Whitney Branagan, (R), Georgia
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- Beth Pearce (D), Barre City

**Attorney General**
- T.J. Donovan (D), South Burlington
- Cris Ericson (P), Chester
- H. Brooke Paige (R), Washington
- Emily Peyton (R), Putney

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**Elections**

Get Out and Vote!
I just read in my favorite science news magazine that astronauts might be able to use their urine to make cement on the moon. That's right. They just need to pee on some lunar soil and voila, they could build a four-story parking garage for their lunar rovers! Permits are another matter.

The notion of using lunar soil to create cement and using that cement in a 3-D printer to create dwellings on the moon has been proposed by some space-exploration researchers, but the large amounts of water that would be needed for such a process make it prohibitive. As I'm sure you remember from the days of the Apollo landings, although lunar soil is quite abundant, water is scarcer than hens' teeth on the moon.

The revelation of using human urine instead of water comes to us from Norway, where apparently there is not much to do during the winter other than Nordic skiing, drinking, and trying to make cement out of available materials.

A chemist at Østfold University College, Anna-Lena Kjøniksen, and her colleagues experimented by creating some faux lunar soil from silica and aluminum oxide powders. They then added water containing a high amount of urea, which is a major component of urine. According to the scientists the urea cuts down on the amount of water needed to create cement by keeping the mixture from becoming crumbly.

They were able to use the resulting... uhh... mud in a 3-D printer and managed to produce layers that when stacked created miniature walls. These walls were able to sustain light amounts of weight and temperature changes.

Several questions remain, however. Kjøniksen said she wants to determine whether the urine would need to be purified before it is used to make cement or whether the astronauts could just pee directly into the cement mixer. Call me silly, but I personally would prefer that, if I were going to be living in one of these dwellings, the urine be purified before going into the cement. (I had a similar reaction when I learned that early pioneers in the American west cooked their beans and bacon over nice smokey “buffalo chip” fires.) Although she didn’t address the issue, another consideration is, if urine can be used directly, exactly how does one pee on the lunar soil while in a pressure suit. As far as I have been able to determine, the men's moonsuits do not have flies, and female astronauts would face even greater challenges. And would opening a fly or flap in a place with no real atmosphere and extreme temperatures pose any danger to various exposed components of the body? At least there is gravity, albeit only one-third that of Earth’s, so things should go where directed if you correct for reduced ballistic drop.

Last, and this is a huge one, exactly how do we get all the beer that would be needed to produce the urine up to the moon? If Anheuser-Busch is aware of this Norwegian research, I’m sure they have already contacted Elon Musk at Space-X or the Russians about the necessary “heavy lift” rockets. Budweiser would be a good candidate for making cement with urine.

After all, my brother did not refer to his cans of Bud as “Bee-wees” for no reason. I had the privilege of growing up in the shadow of Cape Canaveral during the early days of the space program, and if the astronauts of the future are anything like the original seven Mercury astronauts, large and frequent shipments of beer will be needed just to keep them happy. As I remember, those seven astronauts were hard partiers in and around Cocoa Beach. If they were still around today and given the task and raw materials, they could probably produce the cement for an extensive lunar metropolis in a couple of months.

I’m making an assumption here that beer is lighter than water because of all the little bubbles in it. Still, given the logistics and expense of lifting all that beer to the moon, instead of Bud or PBR, I’m putting my money on a local label: Zero Gravity.
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Occasionally in life you run across things that happen which are unbelievable. You know it’s a contradiction, but that’s how you feel. The explosion of the Challenger space shuttle and Neil Armstrong’s walk on the moon are examples. The worldwide lockdown from COVID-19 is another.

To me, and many others who knew him, the death of Michael Nobles is a fourth. It just seems unbelievable that he died.

Everything about Michael spoke of youthfulness, wellness, and enthusiasm. He was fifty when he died but looked twenty years younger. He ran 5 and 10 kilometer races like he was still on the UVM track team. There was not an ounce of fat on him. As president of Union Mutual of Vermont companies on State Street, he initiated a “donate not to shave” program for the male employees to build morale, raise money for charity, and — I think — to prove to others that he in fact needed to shave — once in a while.

Michael succeeded me as president of the insurance company, where he had previously served as staff accountant, treasurer and CFO, and executive vice president. Insurance is largely a financial business, and after 25 years at Union, Michael knew our business cold. If a number moved in square 67, he could tell you its impact on any other square in the spreadsheet. Even more remarkable for a “numbers guy,” he could explain all this to financial laymen like me, or others like me on our board of directors.

If that were all Michael could do, we still probably would have elected him CEO. But there was so much more.

Michael really cared about people. He knew the names of all 100 employees. He served burgers at outdoor picnics and organized teams for the Corporate Cap. He was extremely proud of us being selected a Best Places to Work company by Vermont Business Magazine seven years in a row. In recent years he led the company, its employees, and agents in providing major support to the Special Olympics, personally leading the Penguin Plunge jumping into Lake Champlain each winter.

Many in Montpelier know Michael from his efforts this spring organizing a meals program for essential workers and others left destitute by the pandemic. It was a program that helped those individuals but also restaurants and delicatessens in town.

As a resident of central Vermont, Michael also contributed to the community. He was a director of Lost Nation Theater and sat on the Montpelier Business Development committee. He loved old cars, and in summer months would sometimes drive his topless Triumph sports car to the office. He was fascinated with clocks and spent hours repairing antique or unusual ones. He wrote with a fountain pen, and his notes were always clear and organized.

But let me get back to unbeliefability (if there is such a word). Michael was into WELLNESS. He did everything in his power to improve the health of our employees, and if they didn’t take advantage of some of these programs, he was not reticent, privately, of criticizing them for it. In fact, just recently he received the Vermont Business Wellness Leadership Award.

And yet he died, well before his actuarial life expectancy.

Michael’s obituary asked friends to donate to two causes: to the Special Olympics and to the Movember Foundation, a charity dedicated to improving men’s health by addressing four conditions in particular: testicular cancer, prostate cancer, mental health in general, and suicide. One must conclude that despite his efforts to promote wellness, he himself was not well.

I’m still having great, great difficulty accepting that fact. I could see nothing in him that suggested sickness. Perhaps I was blind, or he was adept (as one friend has suggested) at shifting the focus elsewhere. As chairman of the board of directors of Union Mutual my focus was on the business, and in that sphere Michael excelled. I did not look enough at the person behind the executive. Could my concern, and the concern of others in that sphere, have made a difference? Perhaps, as the website of the Movember Foundation attests. I certainly know I would have tried, because we have just lost a terrific man and a superb chief executive.

Josh Fitzhugh lives in Berlin.
My father, the mathematician, was born in Leipzig in 1922. When the Nazis marched into Austria in the early spring of 1938 — the Anschluss — my father was called into the principal’s office at the King Albert Gymnasium and was informed that, as a non-Aryan, he was no longer welcome at a German school.

He then attended a Jewish high school in Leipzig. Persecution of Jews escalated. They were not allowed to enter public swimming pools, then cinemas and department stores. His passport was stamped with a big letter J.

For Americans, of course, 9/11 recalls September 11, 2001. Europeans reverse the order of the day and month; for my father 9/11 meant Kristallnacht, the 9th of November, 1938. My father wrote in his memoir that on that evening he had visited a friend, with whom he said he was “discussing some philosophical questions.”

Returning home by streetcar, I noticed a bunch of rough characters carrying wooden clubs. I wondered: who had brought them to town and to what purpose?

The answer was revealed next morning on the telephone grapevine. There had been a pogrom during the night, which later came to be known as the “Kristallnacht.” Two synagogues had been burned down, a number of homes had been invaded, people were beaten up and their possessions were thrown out of the window. Some people were forced to jump down the embankment of the Pleisse.

He then recounted an incident that probably occurred in the last month of 1938:

A group of SS men entered our building and demanded to see my father. My mother shouted: “What do you want with my husband? He is not here.” When I remonstrated with her for the undignified way of losing her cool, she pointed out that Papa had gone to the attic for some purpose and she had shouted to warn him not to come down.

Unfortunately, my father was a law-abiding citizen and he subsequently turned himself in at Gestapo headquarters. He was sent to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen and held there for several weeks, until my mother managed to obtain visas for our family to emigrate to Peru. Apparently, the Nazis were not yet prepared to exterminate the Jews, but to force them to leave the country.

This was not a simple matter, since visas were not readily available. People who knew how to go about this managed to procure visas to Shanghai or Central America. This required some monetary expenditure.

I remember father returning home, his head shaved and his suit crumpled, owing to the camp’s delousing procedure. He did not talk to us children about the horrible treatment he had received. Silence had been one condition for his release, as was the promise to leave Germany as soon as possible.

On reading this portion of my father’s memoir, my nephew Simon remarked on “the perfunctory and almost blasé way [my father] Jim talks about events that are nearly unfathomable to me in their horribleness.” Simon noted how “the humanity and sense of ethical duty with which he writes is powerful in its understatedness.”

The family did not go to Peru. My father and his sister Sonja, younger by four years, were sent on the Kindertransport to England. In London, my father later wrote:

… we were graciously put up by father’s relatives: aunt Sally and uncle Leo and cousin Ruth with her husband. London then was the biggest city in the world, and I was quite overwhelmed. I commuted daily from Hendon Central to Oxford Circus, near where I got a job in Bloomsbury House. This was an office building dedicated to the processing of incoming refugees. My job was to carry documents from one desk to another. At this point in his story, my father says something that is so typical and admirable that it hurts:

... we were graciously put up by father’s relatives: aunt Sally and uncle Leo and cousin Ruth with her husband. London then was the biggest city in the world, and I was quite overwhelmed. I commuted daily from Hendon Central to Oxford Circus, near where I got a job in Bloomsbury House. This was an office building dedicated to the processing of incoming refugees. My job was to carry documents from one desk to another. At this point in his story, my father says something that is so typical and admirable that it hurts:

I took my lunch breaks in the British Museum, where I learned much about Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece.

He was a person who could blinker the ugly facts of his immediate time and see the brilliant knowledge of the world beyond.

Drove me crazy, sometimes, growing up, as his mind focused on the grand accomplishments of the ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians and Greeks, not to mention the beautiful abstractions of mathematics, but not on my trivial exploits.
East Calais Community Trust Purchases General Store Building

Editor:
On June 29, 2020 the East Calais Community Trust (ECCT) finalized the purchase of the general store building on Rt. 14. The Vermont non-profit was formed in 2019 with the goal of purchasing and renovating the historic building in the heart of the village and reopening the general store, which closed in December. The Preservation Trust of Vermont has provided fiscal sponsorship and guidance along the way.

The Community Trust sends a HUGE thank you to all supporters who donated funds and gave of their time, energy, and talents to bring this to fruition. And members are excited to begin work on the next steps of cleaning out the commercial space, beginning renovations, and searching for a new storekeeper.

Board members hope that interim pop-up events and fundraisers will generate interest and enthusiasm in the project from the greater Calais community, on the way to the eventual reopening of the store. They point to the recently launched “Extra Row” free veggies and (maybe) eggs events that take place Saturday mornings on the porch from 9 to 11. Local gardeners are encouraged to share their extra produce with families in need or those who may not have a garden.

Another benefit to the community is the building’s new Wi-Fi hot spot, which provides free high-speed internet access to anyone within range.

Along with the store lease, three existing affordable housing apartments will continue to generate revenue for the Trust. Board members hope that volunteers will step up to help with “sprucing-up” projects in the revival of the building and the store.

Donations for renovation work can be made payable to the Preservation Trust of Vermont, with a note in the memo line “for ECCT” and mailed to ECCT, PO Box 14, E. Calais, VT 05650.

Janice Oblon, joblison@gmail.com
Denise Wheeler, cockapoo@myfairpoint.net
Marc Mihaly, marc.mihaly@gmail.com

Open Letter to Officers and Comments on BLM

Editor:
THANK YOU! Not only have you been on the front lines with COVID-19, but now rallies want to dismantle you. Black Lives Do Matter. Police Lives Matter. Our own liberty and justice matters, too.

Our nation aspires to liberty and justice for all; that comes with a price. It needs muscle to uphold this. Dismantling the police is a rally cry that should make everyone take note of who wants to strip us of our freedoms. Who would protect us from crimes and seek to bring the unlawful to justice on our behalf? Agreed, in some settings there are places that need some cleaning. Thankfully, there’s not much of that in Vermont. We should tout our horns.

Do you know that 24/7wallst.com, who yearly monitors statistics, portrays Vermont as:
• Percentage black residents: 0.9 percent (3rd lowest)
• Black homeownership rate: 24.6 percent (9th lowest)
• Black incarceration rate: 2,214 per 100,000 (19th lowest)

This means only two states have a lower percentage of black residents, only eight states have a higher rate of black home ownership, and only 18 states have lower incarceration rates.

Vermont is the only state with a larger share of African American adults having graduated from college than white adults. Of African American adults, 37.0 percent have at least a bachelor’s degree — the highest share of any state — higher than the 35.1 percent of white residents with similar attainments.

The difference in incomes between white and black residents is the smallest in the country. In Vermont, African American families earn $50,933 annually, the third most of any state, about $4,000 less than the state’s typical white household. Nationally the income gap between white and black Americans is roughly $24,000.

Vermont is one of two states that allows citizens incarcerated on a felony charge to vote while in prison. Vermont therefore effectively has no legally disenfranchised black Americans; nationwide, one in every 13 African Americans is disenfranchised.

Black lives do matter. My father was at the MLK “I Have a Dream” speech in a time when these needs were much greater. There’s not a lot of need to fund inquiries into injustices here in Vermont. Perhaps Vermont should channel some BLM funding to promote awareness of our ethnic diversity and give honor to great civic leaders of all races who have sought to promote Freedom and Unity, Liberty and Justice.

Thank you Vermont police and sheriffs for being our front lines for COVID-19, for monitoring peaceful BLM rallies, and for many years of protecting our freedom. May you know our united support and gratitude.

Martha Hafner, Randolph Center

Re: Black Lives Matter on State Street

Editor:
Being a native Vermonter, I was first dismayed and then disappointed to learn that, “Black Lives Matter,” has been painted on State Street, the street in front of the Capitol Building. Are there not laws against vandalism anymore?

I did find the Zoom video of the Montpelier City Council meeting that approved said actions, watched it, and was surprised that not one person asked the question as to whether painting a political statement on State Street was even legal in regards to vandalism (Vs. State Statute 13 V.S.A. §3701, Unlawful mischief) and/or the probation of billboards in the state (Vs. State Statute 10 V.S.A. § 495). You could almost say that the Montpelier City Council showed a blatant disregard as to whether these painting actions were even legal!

Then I read that Governor Phil Scott gave the go-ahead to spoil the street! What gives him, or any other individual, the ability to ignore State Statute? Whoever is responsible for this defacement needs to be personally, financially responsible for cleaning it up.

But maybe we have precedent now. What if I and a bunch of my friends want to paint “Biden 2020” on one of our other major roads? How about “Trump 2020”? We could also paint “Meat is Murder” or perhaps “Jesus Saves.” There appears to be nothing stopping me from painting “Jacobs Pizza” either!

I used to think that we Vermonters were just a little bit smarter than your average American citizen, but I see that is no longer the case.

Bret R. Collier, Berlin, Vermont; Big Lake, Minnesota
I t was a gray and bleary evening with rain pelting the dirty window panes. Inside, the waiting room of the railroad station was equally dismal and forlorn with a small number of lackluster people sitting or wandering aimlessly. My mother stood staunchly (an adjective surely coined just for her!) holding a child by each hand, suitcases at her feet. Frank and I stared dully without enthusiasm until we saw our father striding through the door toward us. His welcome was warm and loving, although I think now the weariness must have shown in his face as it did in Mother’s.

This was Rockford, Illinois, where my young life nearly ended. We knew not a single soul, nor did a single soul know us. Dad had rented a small house for us there. It was miles from the army camp where he trained his men for combat in World War I, but the nearest he could find. How long we were there before disaster struck, I don’t know — not long, I think.

Both Frank and I fell victims to the raging, virulent influenza epidemic of 1918, which took thousands of lives. We were hospitalized, I not once, but twice. The doctor knew from the beginning that he could save the son whose case was lighter, but probably not the daughter. The day when he expected the crisis in my condition, Mother asked, “Shall I call my husband?”

“There is no way he can get leave to reach here in time,” the doctor replied. “Either she will turn the corner in the next few hours or she will be gone.”

Obviously, I survived.

All through these anxious days Mother’s heart ached for the doctors and nurses working tirelessly around the clock, often falling victims themselves to this scourge. When at last she had us both at home, I seemed to be worse again. She put in a call for the doctor. When he returned the call, his reply was desperate: “My God, I can’t do anything more!”

The next day Mother picked up the paper to read that the doctor — her doctor — had committed suicide.

I can now picture her desperate loneliness as Mother coped with our convalescence. Help came from an unexpected and heart-warming source. Neighbors came with chicken soup, custards, and hands outstretched in sympathy to this mother, stranger in their midst. Not one of us ever returned there in a lifetime, but the place was never mentioned among us without the warmest thoughts of gratitude to those beautiful caring neighbors of Rockford, Illinois.

As a postscript to this story, I recovered completely, but Frank was left with asthma, which haunted him all his life. For me this was a time of bewilderment and confusion. I knew nothing of the agony of that First World War, or of the celebration of the armistice ending it on November 11, 1918, when I was five.

Ann Keller Blanchard is the mother of Montpelier resident Margaret Blanchard, professor Emerita of Graduate Studies at Vermont College’s Master of Arts Program in Creativity.
Norma Raymond Turns 97 Under Quarantine

By Carl Etnier

When Norma Raymond turned 95, the lawn outside the Montpelier Unitarian Church was full of well-wishers. As of a week before her July 15th birthday this year, when she turns 97, she had no expectations of a party on her birthday — she assisted living facility she lives in remains under quarantine.

I caught up with the longtime East Montpelier resident, now temporarily staying in Heaton Woods in Montpelier, to get a local perspective on aging with grace. I wanted Raymond’s perspective to complement a radio interview with bestselling author Elizabeth Marshall Thomas on her latest book, published at age 88, “Growing Old.”

While Thomas told me she started feeling old when she hit 80 or so, Raymond seemed to have access to a fountain of youth, until she didn’t. “I felt so young and everything through 94 and 95,” she said, “and then I hit 96, and that’s when all this stuff began.” She was living in her home on Towne Hill Road when she had a heart attack and a small stroke on January 3, which began an odyssey to Central Vermont Medical Center and then Woodridge Rehabilitation and Nursing. When she was strong enough she moved back home — for a while.

“I had a HomeShare tenant coming,” she said. “I’ve always done very well with HomeShare tenants. I had three HomeShares who are still in touch with me, friendly with me, very often.” HomeShare Vermont matches people with a house to share, and who often need help around the house, with people who need a home and are willing to assist in chores in return for reduced rent. After her return from Woodridge, however, Raymond said the HomeShare tenant didn’t work out, and she moved into Heaton Woods Residence in Montpelier.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was detected in Vermont in March, long-term care and group-living settings such as Heaton Woods closed their doors to visitors. The older residents are especially vulnerable to the coronavirus, and more than half of Vermont’s 56 COVID-19 deaths have occurred at two elder care homes in Burlington. In June, state guidelines began to allow visitors on a limited basis, and Heaton Woods has opened for visitors three days a week.

“Visitors can sign up to have visitors Monday, Wednesdays, or Fridays,” she said, “you come, you sign in, you follow the mask rule, and all these distancing rules.” She doesn’t charge for the service until a school board member approached her about picking up more kids as a school employee. They paid her a dollar a day to make the rounds, she said. Eventually she bought a Chevy Suburban and converted it into more of a bus.

The couple moved to Raymond’s current home in the mid-1980s, and Raymond is known as a force in the neighborhood, with friendships and families apparently stretching long distances in all directions. Two neighbors refer to her as “Nurse number one” and “Daughter number two,” and one of them, Rachael Grossman, recounted standing in line with Raymond to get into a Ground Hog Opry performance in Waterbury. “We started out chatting with someone ahead of us who we knew, and it turned out they were related. She knows everybody; she knows everything: she is an unstoppable force for social justice.”

Grossman’s husband, Paul Erlbaum, was part of the conversation, and he added, “She has had an ‘Impeach Trump’ sticker on her car since he was inaugurated.”

Today, Raymond hopes to return someday to her East Montpelier home. In Heaton Woods, she’s often on her phone or FaceTime, keeping up the network of contacts she’s built up over nearly a century. (Her home phone number now connects to her room, so friends don’t need to look up a new number for her). She takes walks around the outside of the building but never leaves the grounds. While she supports the quarantine for older living homes, she said with discouragement, “I may be in quarantine forever.”

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Local Gardening Craze — Part II

The photo spread concerning the College Street garden was inadvertently left out of last month’s issue of The Bridge. If you didn’t read last month’s issue (you still can online at montpelier-bridge.org), Paul Carnahan wrote about Montpelier’s gardening craze 100 years ago, during World War I. He drew the parallel to a renewed interest in gardening this spring during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There’s been a resurgence in home gardening for food during this pandemic. Observers have linked it back to the “Victory Gardens” of the World War II era, but the practice of gardening to achieve community self-sufficiency can really be traced back to World War I. Montpelier embraced this movement whole-heartedly at a scale that is hard to imagine today.

On April 15, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson issued an appeal to Americans to increase the production of food to meet the demands of war. ‘Food will win the war,’ he told the country, and the residents of Montpelier responded. By August of that year, The Vermonter, a state-wide magazine, reported, “It may truly be said that Montpelier is a City of Gardens; and a center of eager response to the President’s call to service and patriotism.”

Gardens were scattered all around the city. The Camp Fire Girls had an acre next to the arsenal on College Street (see picture and map).

Carnahan also describes community-tended gardens on Langdon Meadow, behind the State House, and in Hubbard Park. Carnahan is a resident of Montpelier and the librarian of the Vermont Historical Society in Barre.

Above, this house at 6 McKinley Street can be seen in the distance in the picture of the Camp Fire Girls’ garden. The house was built in about 1895, about 22 years before the garden was planted. Below, this 1915 Sanborn Map of College and McKinley streets has been altered to show the approximate location of the Camp Fire Girls’ garden relative to the arsenal (destroyed 1945) and 6 McKinley Street.
It’s Official: Montpelier Has a New Police Chief

New Montpelier Police Chief Brian Peete was sworn in July 1. Peete, who is the first black police chief to serve in Vermont and also the first Montpelier chief in 40 years who was not born and raised in the city, was warmly welcomed by Montpelier officials.

Langdon Street Loses Parking, Gains Outdoor Dining Space

The Montpelier City Council voted June 24 to prohibit parking on both sides of Langdon Street and to block off the northern side of the street (pictured in schematic below) to allow businesses to provide outdoor dining and possible retail expansion as a way to aid businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

June 26 is the Start of Early Voting Period for August Primaries

Early voting, including no-excuse absentee voting by mail, has begun for the Vermont statewide primary elections, which take place August 11. Voters can request their ballot from their town clerk in writing, by phone, by e-mail, or in person or by using a postcard the state is sending voters.

Juneteenth in Montpelier Meant Good Food

Juneteenth, a commemoration dating back to 1865 of the ending of slavery in the United States was celebrated June 19 on the State House lawn with participants bringing picnics and buying food from local vendors, including Kool Runnin’, Mary’s Ghanaian Kitchen, Woodbelly Pizza, and more.

In case you missed it on MontpelierBridge.org

Check out some of the stories you may have missed on MontpelierBridge.org. You can read these and other stories in full on our website, which now features frequent updates.

City Clerk John Odum, right, swears in Chief Brian Peete. Photo by Carla Occaso.

Montpelier residents gather on the State Street to celebrate Juneteenth. Photo by J. Gregory Gerdel.

Schematic courtesy of the City of Montpelier.
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