

THE Hardwick Gazette

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Buffalo Mountain Co-op Weighing Purchase of Hardwick Village Market



visualization via Buffalo Mountain Co-op

A rendering in the fall "Bullshead" newsletter of the rebranded Village Market

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – The Buffalo Mountain Food Co-op (BMFC) member board has made an offer to purchase the Village Market “building, its inventory and equipment, and the adjoining green space and parking area,” according to its Fall 2021 informational newsletter.

See PURCHASE, 2

Some Residents Express Concern Over Possible Co-op Purchase

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK – Some residents have expressed concern over the impact on village residents should the

See CONCERN, 3

Plainfield Outbreak Continues, COVID Picture Gets Muddier

by Doug McClure

MONTPELIER – An August 26 Plainfield wedding, followed by a secondary outbreak at a day-care center, was the epicenter of a COVID outbreak that began with three cases in three towns from central Vermont to Chittenden County.

As of 7 September, the outbreak had spread to 65 people, largely in the Plainfield-Barre-Marshfield area. The Department of Financial Regulation (DFR) map showed a circle of spread from Plainfield north into Hardwick, east into Peacham/Groton, west into Moretown, and south into Williamstown and Washington. A related cluster centered around Eden, Lowell, Hyde Park, and Johnson, with two other smaller clusters around Burlington

and its suburbs.

Twinfield Union Principal Mark Mooney said, “We have felt the impact of the community wedding. We had to send home half of our second grade, kindergarten and sixth grade. K, 2 and 6 students returned to campus today. We have not had any person-to-person spread in school. We have had a few other students who did not start school until this week due to their connection to the wedding. We are hopeful things will calm down at school, but the virus is very present in our community.”

Cases in Local Schools Remain Low

Unrelated to that outbreak, the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) emailed that

See OUTBREAK, 4



courtesy East Calais Community Trust/R. Edwards & Co.

Architect R. Edwards & Co. has created this rendering for what the fully realized renovation of the East Calais Store might look like.

East Calais Store to Receive \$383,000 Grant

by Doug McClure

EAST CALAIS – On September 2, Governor Phil Scott announced over \$13 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to be awarded statewide.

The grants are funded through the Vermont Community Development Program, which is a part of the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. One recipient is the non-profit East Calais

See GRANT, 4

Wolcott Hosts Community Information Event

by Doug McClure

WOLCOTT – Last Friday, the Wolcott Select Board hosted a community event to inform its residents about multiple projects the board has researched over the past months.

Members of the Wolcott Volunteer Fire Department grilled burgers (both real and veggie) and hot dogs for the crowd. Tomatoes from the just-started community garden were on hand to go with the burgers.

Select board chair Linda Martin said it was estimated about 110 people turned out. She said, “I was thrilled with the turn out. Everyone kept saying thank you for holding the event and we need to do it every year. Thank you to

See EVENT, 4



photo by Doug McClure

(Left to right) Elliott Bjerke, Junior Firefighter Bailey Shepard, and Chief Jim Holton of the Wolcott Volunteer Fire Department cook for a hungry crowd.



photo by Doug McClure

Children made, or attempted to make, balloon animals at last Friday's community event in Wolcott. In the background is Town Clerk Belinda Clegg.

Grant

Continued From Page One

Community Trust (ECCT), which is working to bring the shuttered East Calais store back to life. The ECCT received a \$383,000 CDBG.

The goals of the ECCT, according to its informational brochure, are renovating the building “so that a general store can once again meet the needs of the community for the next 100 years,” as well as the three apartments for “much-needed affordable housing,” and ensuring the building “continues to serve as a place that brings the community together.” As with other similar projects, such as the Albany store, the ECCT will not operate the store, but contract with a store operator who “will be solely responsible for deciding how to run a successful store.”

ECCT Treasurer and founding board member Janice Ohlsson said that the ECCT has just launched a

fall fundraising campaign to bring in the final \$300,000 that is needed for work to begin.

She said, “We have raised, between grants and community donations, a little over a million dollars, with construction and development costs grossly estimated to be around \$1.5 million. We are starting a fall fund-raising campaign to help us fill the gap, so construction can begin late in 2021 or early 2022.”

Ohlsson said that the ECCT has already signed contracts with East Calais architect R. Edwards & Co. and Barre-based contractor E.F.Wall & Associates, Inc.

The ECCT said the \$1.5 million cost of the overall project is in line with similar projects, such as the Albany General Store (around \$800,000 for a new building) and the Currier Store (a \$1 million renovation). Beyond the scale of the work necessary due to the building’s 5,300 square feet of

space, the project also must meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, lead hazard mitigation, and historic preservation requirements. Because the apartments in the finished building are affordable housing, the ECCT must bring them up to Section 8 requirements with one being ADA-compliant. East Calais village is listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places and the store is listed as a contributing resource, so the work must adhere to National Park Service standards for historic buildings.

The future store will not have gas tanks. One precipitating factor of the store’s closure in December 2019 was that the state was requiring its owner to replace the fuel tanks, which was prohibitively expensive. The ECCT said, “our research concluded that the financial return on the sale of gas for the store operator is minimal

and will not contribute significantly to the long-term viability of the store.” An above-ground tank behind the store for ethanol-free gas at some point in the future has not been ruled out, which the ECCT said “would be useful for generators, mowers, snowmobiles, etc.”

There has always been a general store in the building since the 1850s, often sharing the two-story structure with other stores and apartments. Over the years, the building has also housed a town library, a milliner, the Good Templars’ Lodge Hall, a garage, and apartments, according to the ECCT.

The ECCT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, so donations should be tax-deductible. To donate, visit bit.ly/eastcalais or mail checks to East Calais Community Trust (ECCT) at P.O. Box 14,

East Calais, Vermont 05650. For more information, visit bit.ly/ecctrust.

Event

Continued From Page One

everyone who worked and donated to make this event a success.”

The crowd ranged from the youngest to the oldest, with lots of kids making balloon animals as their parents perused the educational information on multiple projects the select board had researched. The topics included the proposed town forest, broadband, the community garden, and wastewater. Wolcott Elementary School was on hand, with principal Matt Foster ready to answer any questions parents had. The library also opened its doors so the public could see first-hand how it was filling out its new location in the Depot.

The subjects that seemed to be the biggest draws (besides the food) the board’s research into broadband and the town forest. Wolcott has neither of those things at this time.

The town recently joined forces with two Communications Unions Districts (CUDs) with the goal of getting broadband to town residents who currently rely on slow and unreliable DSL service, at best. Since Wolcott is located on a boundary between

two CUDs, Lamoille Fibernet and NEK Community Broadband, it has joined both. Former board member Michael Davidson is the town’s alternate representative to Lamoille Fibernet and was on hand to answer questions at the event. There was typically a line waiting to speak with Davidson.

Project Manager Kate Wanner of the Vermont Trust for Public Land was at the event to field questions about the proposed Wolcott Town Forest and also drew large crowds. She had set up multiple displays and had information for residents to take with them about the potential benefits the town could realize from spending \$25,000 on a town forest.

Residents also treated the educational event as a rare social opportunity in COVID times, and the weather cooperated with a beautiful early fall evening and dry skies. The majority of those in attendance were younger than typically seen the few times people attend select board meetings, and more in line with those the Census found to be the median age range of 38-40.

Martin said at the event that she was very pleased to see the “positivity” of the atmosphere.

Outbreak

Continued From Page One

it had found two positive cases “in the Craftsbury schools community,” but said: “We’ve identified no close contacts.”

As of the September 12 state report, one new case was reported in the Cabot School system.

Statewide, Vermont reported 78 new cases in schools in the seven days up to September 12, bringing the total number of school cases reported to 159 in the two weeks since schools opened.

Cases Climb, State Data Subject to Change

With the exception of Plainfield and Marshfield, towns in our coverage area continued to see small increases in the number of cases week-to-week. In the rest of the state, the number of cases is increasing rapidly.

Since at least the start of September, Vermont has been reporting one case count on the COVID dashboard and then revising it upward a day later, sometimes again even later, in the state’s data portal, which is separate from the widely publicized “COVID-19 dashboard.”

On September 4, the initial count was 54, which was a day later revised up to 104 and later to 112. The following day’s count increased from 78 to 158.

COVID Cases in Young People Surge, Vaccination Lags

As of September 2, Vermont

was first-in-the-nation in the percentage of COVID cases in children. According to the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), as of September 9, 22.9% of total COVID cases in Vermont — 6,783 to be exact — have been in kids nineteen years of age or younger. In the one week between its September 2 and September 9 report, the period when schools first opened in Vermont, the AAP showed an increase of 258 cases in kids 0-19.

As of September 14, 51% of people ages 12-17 in Orleans County had received at least one dose of the vaccine. In Caledonia County, 60% of kids 12-15 have, and 69% for those 16-17 have.

According to CDC data, just over half of the eligible population in Caledonia and Orleans County is fully vaccinated. Between both counties, nearly 7,000 children under the age of twelve are too young to receive the vaccine, according to Census data.

Mask Recommendation Extended

At last Wednesday’s meeting, Governor Phil Scott’s administration changed course on its original 10-day masking recommendation for students twelve and over. In-school masking is now recommended for all students through October 4.

Both the Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) and Caledonia Central Supervisory Union (CCSU) had already instituted universal masking from the outset.



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