

EAST MONTPELIER Signpost

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Volume 34 / Number 1

NEWS OF OUR COMMUNITY

September–October 2023

Stories of the Flood

Though this year's theme was not pre-planned, it is certainly foremost in everyone's mind. This issue provides an opportunity to share thoughts and experiences about the momentous 2023 flood with each other—now and for the future.

EMFD: Prepared to Help

by Beth Parker

When the forecast predicts “historic and catastrophic flooding,” the East Montpelier Fire Department (EMFD) jumps into emergency preparedness mode. At the village station, calls went out to ensure there was plenty of Emergency Medical Service (EMS) coverage to respond to any medical emergencies. As always, the utility task vehicle (UTV) was on the trailer and ready for any off-road emergencies. Despite their preparedness, the East Montpelier firefighters and ambulance crew had no idea how big an impact the storm would have.

As the rain became heavier, Assistant Chief Thomas Parker (3rd generation EMFD firefighter and grandson of co-founder, Bob Parker) joined Chief Albert Petrella, Lieutenant Sandy Conti, Head of Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Veronica Collins, and numerous other volunteer firefighters at the station. The calls started coming in fast and furiously Sunday night for trees down on power lines, car accidents, flooded roadways, and flooding basements.

Route 14 was flooded, Route 2 had a lake at the bottom of Towne Hill Road, and dirt roads were washing away. Most radio dispatch towers were down, meaning that those still functioning were crowded with calls, making communication with dispatch difficult. Volunteers arrived to answer phones and make food for the firefighters and EMS responders as they rushed between calls.

Based on calls and information from other towns, crews



Going through Coburn Bridge by canoe.

Carol Dickson

were mapping road closures to navigate the fastest route to medical emergencies and to take patients to the hospital. The UTV was used on numerous ambulance calls to get to those who couldn't be reached by car.

Some people simply could not get home. EMFD members welcomed them in, and the fire station became emergency housing for a handful of community members. Nurse Roselyn Burgess described coming home from South Burlington. Despite leaving work early, she spent around two hours trying to get home by different routes. The 211 non-emergency line directed her to the firehouse. “When I

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200 Years of History and Resilience

The floodwaters receded. Businesses, homeowners, renters, and volunteers are working hard to rebuild their lives and livelihoods after the devastation in July. Despite the difficulties, there is much to celebrate: Vermonters everywhere rose to the occasion, demonstrating kindness and compassion, generosity and neighborliness, endurance and optimism. Brave Little State* indeed!

Here in East Montpelier, a celebration of a different sort is taking place in mid-September. The Old Meeting House, a fixture in East Montpelier Center since its beginnings in 1823, is commemorating its Bicentennial. Two hundred meals have been donated to the Onion River Food Shelf, and a Bicentennial church service on Sunday, September 17 will include returning pastors, special music, and the presentation

of the publication of the church's history. Following the service, a potluck picnic and games are on tap, as well as a Parish House art show featuring historic photos of East Montpelier. That show will run through October. Later in the fall, a Bicentennial art quilt will grace the Parish House, along with work by other local artists.

We are so fortunate to live in a community with resilient, caring, talented people, and a rich history.

--Merry Schmidt

* *The Brave Little State* speech was delivered by Vermont native President Calvin Coolidge in September 1928, following the devastating 1927 flood.

Happy 100th Birthday, Grace and John

Grace and John Mekkelsen both celebrate becoming centenarians this fall. Born just 17 days apart, they've led a long and storied life together.

They both served during World War II, meeting after the war ended, when a friend set them up on a blind date for a Nurse's Ball in Barre. Although friends and family advised against it, they married on January 6, 1951. Domiciled in Barre initially, they moved to East Montpelier as the family grew. A few years later, they moved to their current home on Route 2, which adjoins their business, Mekkelsen RV. Through the years, the business has sold pop-up campers, and MG, Subaru and Saab vehicles, and was Vermont's first



John and Grace Mekkelsen

Winnebago dealer.

Their business emerged from their enjoyment of camping with friends and family in favorite spots, including in Maine and Florida; it has grown considerably over the years. In 1986, the "kids," Connie and Bruce, took over the business; John and Grace are pleased that granddaughter Olivia is now working at the dealership alongside her father and aunt.

When asked for tips to living to 100 or more years, Grace suggested having a supportive spouse, eating good home-cooked food, getting exercise daily, and drinking no more than one alcoholic beverage a day.

When you see John and Grace this fall, please be sure to wish them a wonderful birthday!

--Rosie Laquerre

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Rosie Rises to the Occasion

by Rosie Laquerre

The river rose so quickly at my Junction Road house in Berlin, that within 30 minutes of breaching the bank, it was up to the house. Water entered the basement apartment, gutted a culvert, and destroyed our road. After contacting 911 to let them know we were flooded but safe



Rosie's lift into the rescue helicopter

courtesy Rosie Laquerre

in the upstairs apartment, a call came from Swift Water Rescue stating they would send a boat that evening between 7 and 9 pm. Nine o'clock came and went, with nary a boat in sight. Hearing the river rushing by, trees coming down in the back yard, and rain pelting against the house made it difficult to sleep Monday night.

Tuesday morning the sun was shining, and the water seemed to be receding. I called 911 to update our status. Officials insisted that we were not safe. (We found out later there were leaky propane tanks in the river and at a neighbor's house.) The next call was from a medic with the New Hampshire National Guard telling me what to expect and describing, step by step, how the evacuation would take place. We were advised to pack a bag for each person with clothing, toiletries, and medicine for a couple of days. With bags ready and an unhappy cat in his carrier, we stepped onto the porch to await the helicopter.

My son Ryan and his friend Justin were hoisted up first. Riding in a collapsible basket 70 feet in the air holding a cat carrier next to a helicopter has never been on my bucket list, but it was an unforgettable experience. Less than an hour later, we arrived at the airport in Berlin. My family (except the cat) is very grateful for the training and professionalism of the NH National Guard.

My Wonderful Neighbors

by Carolyn Pastore

On July 10, before going to bed, I checked all over my house for any sign of water coming in and found only a small leak near my stove pipe. All else was dry. I felt pretty secure, since my home is up high, and in the 44 years I've lived here, there had never been any water issue. Imagine my surprise the next morning when several neighbors began texting about water in their basements, and I opened my basement door to see water covering the floor! I wasn't sure how to even start cleaning up. I texted one neighbor who had dealt with basement water to ask if he knew anyone who might help. He didn't, but said he'd be over soon with his wet/dry vacuum.

When he arrived, we found that what I thought was a couple of inches was actually about four. He set to work and was soon filling and carrying out loads of water. I began filling one bucket at a time and lugging each outside. Soon other neighbors showed up. We had a bucket brigade going, and some people began hauling out everything that had been on the floor. I was feeling quite overwhelmed at

that point! Luckily, one neighbor took charge. My garage became a staging area for either letting things dry or trash-ing them. That way, I didn't have to decide that minute.

We were making progress, but it was slow going. Another neighbor came by and said she had a portable sump pump and would be right back. She was back soon, set up the pump, and had it pumping the water out the window. By 5:30 pm the pump had done its job, the remaining puddles of water had been sucked up, and fans and my de-humidifier were running. My garage was filled with several garbage bags of debris, while other items were drying out.

I really don't know what I would have done without my wonderful neighbors, many of whom also had some flooding but came to lend a hand anyway. My new dog, Murray, and I are fine, and all the items lost are just stuff. I was able to salvage class photos from the 1980s and '90s, and those are precious memories.

And in Adamant...

by Liz Knapp

Monday, July 10, 1 pm: It's been raining and raining, heavy, nonstop. The Adamant brook has overflowed. The stone bridge is submerged. The picnic area is under water. Alarming, but also not unheard of.

4:30 pm: Rachael closes up the Coop early.

8:36 pm: Alison, who lives across the street from the Coop, emails: "Not that there's anything you can do about it, but there's no more road in downtown Adamant." Haggett Road is a deep, muddy, foaming river. The rain continues. Alison is awake all night, listening to the unbelievably strong sounds of so much water—from the sky, from that new river, from Adamant Pond—tumultuous, raging, rushing, tearing, wrenching, spilling.

Tuesday, July 11, 6:52 pm: Colin emails: "The Coop looks high and dry from a distance. I was unable to access it from Center, Haggett, or Martin Road." His picture shows the river rushing right past the Coop's front steps. The rain has mostly stopped.

7:44 am: An email from Dot. She opened the Coop for the morning shift, after a 40-minute detour via Lightening Ridge Road, though she lives just blocks away. A flurry of emails ensues from staff members reporting on the state of their driveways, their roads. Sue offers to bike to her afternoon shift. I decide to keep the store open its normal hours.

8:20am. My kids and I walk down to the Coop from home, a half mile south on Center Road. The road is gone; the river has taken over. Dot tries to yell something to me from the other side, but I can't hear her because the water is deafening. I can't get across.

1:18 pm: I walk down to the Coop again. The flood has receded somewhat. Neighbors are at work rebuilding a passage through to my side. I head to South Barre to pick up the Coop dairy order. On returning, the water is only ankle deep. I wade the milk across. Five people come and help.



Haggett Rd. washes out by the Adamant Coop

Liz Knapp

Through this natural disaster, the Adamant Coop has been a comforting presence. Calm and steady, staff members heroically kept the store open for supplies and conversation. This is not the Coop's first flood and most likely won't be the last. Natural disasters churn up not only fear, sadness, and grief, but also neighborliness, help, and hope.

Tuesday, July 25, 3:32 am: I watch the road crew drive away. Haggett Road is entirely passable, as are Center, Adamant, Quarry, and Sodom Pond Roads. All roads, once again, lead to Adamant.

Still in Adamant...Positivity Out of Catastrophe!

by Alison Underhill

As the flood waters flowed down through Adamant, wiping out its roads and the small brookside park, it left huge gullies and deposited rocks and silt further down. So powerful! Some of that water was flowing into the fixer-upper house at the corner. Many community members and strangers worked for hours to save that house. They picked up large rocks, covered those with small stones and gravel, and made small "dams" to divert the water towards what should have been the stream. Though the cellar did flood and the shed was covered with silt, the house did not see damage. Amazing!

It was just wonderful to see so many people working together, kids and dogs running around (carefully supervised so they didn't get lost in the non-road!), and the Adamant Coop, which was spared and open for business.

As of this writing—July 22—the road crew has been out for two days, working its way down from the Music School to the Adamant Coop; the road nears completion. Cheers to those tired road crew members, who are trying to fix all the roads that have been damaged. We thank you all.



Haggett Rd.

Liz Knapp

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We Were World News

by Hilari Farrington & Benedict Koehler

Late Sunday afternoon, we had just flown in from Ireland and were on the Dartmouth Coach from Logan. At some point in the journey, near our destination in New Hampshire, the rain began. It rained so hard that the emergency exit in the roof of the bus began to leak, leaving a puddle on the floor, though, fortunately, missing any passengers.

We drove home from Lebanon to East Montpelier during a lull in the rain. Up on a hill, without a basement and far from streams or rivers, we

were fine. But in the next few days, as news went out on the BBC, RTE, CBC, etc., we began to get messages from Ireland, Scotland, Canada, and across Europe—so many that we were overwhelmed trying to answer them all. We hadn't realized that the flooding in our little part of the world had become an international story. In fact, when we had someone checking on our safety from Bangladesh, we realized how far the news had traveled.

A Good Neighbor

by Edie Miller

Living high on a hill and not very close to a stream, I don't have many worries about flooding. However, the drainage around my house does depend heavily on a sump pump in my basement.

As the rains became heavy and constant on the first day of the storm, I could hear my sump pump doing its job—a constant on/off routine—that was disturbingly active but also reassuring.

At about 5:30 pm, the sound stopped. I ran downstairs to see droplets of water starting to pop up along the tiny cracks in the cement, and the hole where the pump sits was overflowing.

After hearing from my plumber that he was stranded in Barre, I began calling neighbors to get the name of a local plumber who might help me out. As I was starting to realize that getting a plumber to come to my aid was not likely, my next-door neighbor insisted on coming over to take a look. Because he knew what he was doing, he quickly discovered that the pump was, in fact, still working but was overwhelmed because its outflow was obstructed. That was easy to fix,

and voila! The film of water, which by that time covered the floor of one basement room, quickly drained and dried up. Gone were my fears of a flooded basement.

There is no way I can adequately express my thanks and gratitude to Andy Ribolini. While at my home, he received several calls asking for his help. After hearing him defer everyone until the next day, I asked Andy why he had trudged through the downpour to my house. "Because you're a neighbor," he said simply.

While every birthday should be a great celebration, the *Signpost* would like to especially recognize those who have attained the very special century mark. Please make us aware of anyone who should be recognized for reaching this milestone.

Losing the Buddha

by Jennifer Boyer

On July 17, not a week after our towns were devastated by the flood, my longtime memoir group agreed to still gather, all in need of a breather from dealing with sump pumps and bad news. Lauren, who lives in Plainfield on the Great Brook, read her piece about their flooding. As the water rose, massive tree trunks and tires barreled by. The tumbling of boulders down the brook sounded like “ground thunder.”

They evacuated—grandbaby and all—after the fire department banged on their door, urging them to go immediately. Their bucolic brookside garden and perennial beds had been swept away, but the house was fine. Lauren wryly mourned the loss of a plastic Buddha statue she had recently placed on the brook’s edge, plus an oyster shell she had kept from her daughter’s wed-

ding. A tiny loss, but still unsettling.

Ten days later, our daughter, Jesse Seret, told me that our 13-year-old grandson, Asa, was going on an expedition in Plainfield with his naturalist mentor Erik “Erok” Gillard. They would walk the shore where Great Brook met the Winooski, near their favorite fishing spots, to clean up debris and trash. That night Jesse posted this picture captioned “Erok and Asa found a Buddha!” Wow! Could this be a rare moment of joy in this apocalyptic time we were living through? I sent Lauren the image and fell asleep, anxious to hear if it was theirs. She replied “YES!!!! That’s it!” Asa left instructions for finding the Buddha. It had travelled almost three-quarters of a mile amidst the grinding boulders. The Buddha—lost, then found—now sits on their deck.



courtesy of Jennifer Boyer

Asa and the Buddah

Aid From Afar

by Ross Hazel, Deborah Fillion, and Chris Racanelli

Ordinarily, the municipal offices are closed after noon on Fridays. But on July 21, after the office staff had left for the weekend, we three listers remained in our office to hear any grievances that might arrive before the end of the day.

Our only “customer” was a Red Cross van with a team from North Carolina and Connecticut, who told us they had 200 meals on board and needed guidance as to who in town could use them. We phoned the Twin Valley Senior Center

to ask if they could distribute the food through their Meals on Wheels program, and a few minutes later we were giving directions to Shorty, the driver.

Last week we heard back from the Twin Valley Board: “What a wonderful surprise and greatly appreciated. We are making good use of the donations. Thank you so much.”

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Prepared, continued from p. 1

got there, everyone was so welcoming and nice. I was offered food and a bed. They helped me find a safe place for my husband to stay for the night.” Finding it difficult to sleep, Burgess went downstairs and joined the volunteer team—listening to the radio and writing down road closures.

Between Sunday, July 9 at 5:30 pm and Wednesday, July 12 at midnight, our fire department responded to 12 ambulance calls and 22 fire calls and provided mutual aid to four structure fires in Barre and Montpelier. In addition, they responded to three swift-water incidents—one involving a helicopter—in order to reach a patient in Plainfield. In total, the department logged approximately 200 personnel

hours, says Chief Albert Petrella.

The EMFD extends gratitude to its volunteers for the countless hours when they left their own families and flooded homes to support our community. Additionally, the EMFD offers thanks to those who provided support and food for the firefighters, volunteers, and temporary guests. Although we all hope to never see this kind of devastation in our community again, our East Montpelier volunteer firefighters are always ready to respond to the next emergency.

How Some EM Businesses Fared

by Ann Stanton

As readers know, the *Signpost* includes stories of town businesses. I looked at the last two years of issues and checked in with several of them.

Jenna Ryan of Elodie Flower Farm (May-June 2023) feels lucky compared to Montpelier businesses. Road closures in Adamant and flooded-out J. Langdon Antiques in Montpelier meant that ordered bouquets could not be picked up; also, some booked events were canceled. The edge of Jenna's field on Sodom Pond took a hit, as did the soil in her fields, which were already so saturated that the downpour left big puddles in places. Although she was initially optimistic that plants would recover, she's now resigned to their loss. She's turned her thoughts to planting cover crops in certain parts. But that's the key: She's thinking about next year, moving ahead.

Ironically, Ananda Gardens (May-June 2022) is sited on land that held housing for the workers who constructed the Wrightsville Dam. From one minute to the next, co-owner Melisa Oliva was checking on heavy rain, then turned her head to see a deluge heading down the steep driveway off Horn of the Moon Road. Patrick Sullivan and the rest of the crew swiftly mobilized to dig trenches and set up earthen barriers to direct the water away from the crops. (Any vegetables that are touched by the flood waters can't be sold, for danger of contamination.) They lost one-third of their tomato crop, but most everything else was spared. The driveway is a canyon, but the "exit" is now the "entrance," and the CSA farmstand is back in operation.



Deb Glottmann

Deb Glottmann of The Mitzvah Fund (Jan-Feb 2023) was too busy to talk, saying that they have been flat out since the flood hit. She referred me to their Facebook page for details. Deb and her team have captured and rescued many flood-affected cats, driving bad roads all through the area to do so. Two weeks in, they were still hard at work for long hours at the Barre emergency pet shelter, collaborating with Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team to treat the many animals who are displaced. At one point Deb noted, "Honestly, it looked like NASCAR there for a minute." They need help to foster canines and felines, so donations are more than welcome. See pictures of their many patients at The Mitzvah

Fund on Facebook.

Chris and Patti Morrison, owners of Ellie's Doggie Daycare (May-June 2022), recently emailed to thank the *Signpost* for reaching out, saying, "We just opened Ellie May's yesterday (Wed. July 27). We suffered severe damage, with six feet of water surrounding our home/business. [Their Facebook page notes that they had to leave the premises on July 11, returning the next evening to find the main part of their house intact, though surrounded by water. The basement, garage, driveway, daycare, play areas, and yard had substantial damage.] Luckily, we had many friends and family members assisting us with the demolition and rebuilding. Our home is still not repaired, as we wait to hear from our flood insurance carrier—which, by the way, is a long process. We are very fortunate compared to others in the community and thank our friends and family who have supported us through this."

Flooding: A Farmer's Perspective

by Kim Watson

As the water recedes and rivers go down, we see the damage done to homes and pray for each family as they rebuild. But what happens to the local farmer? We see saturated farm fields along the waterways that will need to be tilled and replanted for use next year during the growing season. In many water-logged fields, the green grass sits atop a thick layer of mud.

As we tour each field, we are trying to determine a few things: (1) How to get back in the field with our equipment to finish the overdue second hay cut without sliding down a hillside in a mower, truck, or chopper; (2) Will the feed have enough quality to satisfy our cows and keep them healthy; (3) Will we have three days of sun to get in square bales of

dry hay for cows and horses?

These thoughts are in farmers' minds as they start each day and as they try to sleep each night. The farm's future and the impacts of the flooding will not be clear until much later, during the winter and spring of next year. There may be financial impacts by having to buy feed from outside sources—if even available—and, in some cases, consequences for the animals if they're given dirt-laden feed. Especially this summer, there is so much truth behind the saying that a farmer's work is never done. We hope that this summer's disasters will recede as we rebuild so much of Vermont, and that farmers can start to make hay while the sun shines.

Flood of July 2023



Terry Allen

Main Street, Montpelier, July 11, 2023



Thomas Parker

Stop really means stop on Towne Hill Road.



Terry Allen

Animal rescue at the corner of Elm and Main Streets



Terry Allen

Main Street, Montpelier

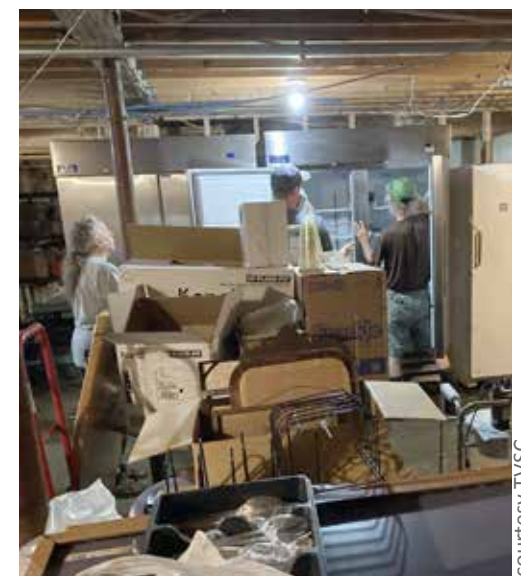
Serving Despite Losses

by Denise Wheeler, Interim Executive Director

Twin Valley Senior Center had some basement flooding due to the recent storm event. After running the sump pump for a day and a half, we were ready for cleaning up and clearing out.

We lost a couple freezers' worth of food—when the plugs got wet and flipped a breaker—and a lot of expensive meal-packing essentials. After a long day, we were ready to reopen with full services, including delivering Meals on Wheels.

We provided both in-person and grab-and-go free lunches for all takers during the week of July 17, aimed especially at road crews, first responders, contractors, law enforcement, volunteers, and anyone displaced. A huge thank you to Board members, staff, and community volunteers for your valuable assistance in making reopening possible.



courtesy TVSC

Cleaning up the basement at TVSC.



Merry Schmidt

The Wrightsville Dam primary spillway, left

Dam: That Was Close!

by Ann Stanton

As Montpelier residents worried about a Wrightsville Dam breach, East Montpelier resident Jeff Cueto, a retired hydrologist at VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation, posted on Front Porch Forum: “Breach is the wrong word.” As designed, he noted, the water was rapidly rising toward the emergency spillway, which has never been overtopped. While spilling would have increased downstream flows, there was no significant potential for the dam itself to fail. The emergency spillway, by design, is several feet below the dam crest.

To further readers’ understand-

ing, Collin O’Neil, manager of the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District, detailed: “The primary spillway, topped by a grey metal tower, is a metal drain situated at the normal water level (634 feet). That drains a maximum of about 1,080 cubic feet per second (cfs) through one five-foot-square, 645-foot-long conduit that runs through the dam. If more than 1,080cfs flow into the reservoir, then that greater volume is retained behind the dam until it reaches the 685-foot level of the secondary [emergency] spillway.”

The secondary spillway, located

on the dam’s east side, passes through a channel cut into the ledge and then rejoins the North Branch downstream from the dam. If the dam’s water level exceeds 685 feet, the total volume flowing out through both dam spillways combined will then equal the amount flowing into the reservoir. Supposing the in-flow rate just barely exceeds 1,080 cfs, only a little more volume would be combined with the flow from the primary spillway. For example, if water is flowing into the reservoir at 1,100 cfs, then the total flowing out would be 1,100cfs; if inflow is 2,000 cfs, it would be 2,000 cfs outflow until the water level drops below 685 feet. In short, over-topping of the secondary spillway results in an increase to the North Branch flow, not a wall of water.

Notably, the 1935 version of the dam had a 90-acre water retention area; but in 1965, it was increased to 190 acres, to handle an estimated “greatest probable rain event.” However, that estimate was based on precipitation models from before 1963. Could or should the retention capacity be increased again? (Even at the sacrifice of the beach and recreation areas?) The dam also serves a hydropower function, discharging additional water into the North Branch when operating. If water level is too high, that discharge ceases, due to too much pressure on the turbines. O’Neill suggests that a public/private partnership with the dam’s hydropower operator, Washington Electric Cooperative, could upgrade to two-stage turbine(s), which would provide improved flood resiliency and increased generation of renewable energy.

Wrightsville Dam was constructed in response to the November flood of 1927, the largest Winooski Basin flood on record. We can thank the Army Corps of Engineers and Civilian Conservation Corps workers, whose design and construction work in 1935 and 1965 saved Montpelier from even more catastrophic flooding—even as we think into the future about how to further strengthen the dam’s protection.



Thomas Parker

High water under the Route 14 bridge

River Rising

by Renée Carpenter

As I watched the river rising and the non-stop torrential rains from my first-floor apartment on Coburn Road, I called the property manager, who made certain the sump pumps were working. His was one of the last cars able to drive across the Coburn covered bridge for many days.

Alone in the house, just before midnight, I heard water running through the basement. The river was almost up to the top of the bank in the back yard, high above the road. I moved my car up between two box elder trees. When I tried to check on the small flock of sheep nearby, I quickly found myself in standing water and retreated. Back in the house, I moved a few boxes of irreplaceable documents and photos and some electronics to an upstairs room. Then I packed a small backpack with my laptop, passport, a change of clothes, and my purse and then went upstairs to try to catch a few hours of sleep.

At daybreak, I could see from an upstairs window that the river had wrapped itself around my elevated house site to fill Coburn Road. It stopped before the little wellhouse, curved itself around the flower beds and past the old hitching post, then partway way up the parking area, where I watched it slowly continue to rise.



phptps by Carol Dickson

Bruce Howlett approaches Renée Carpenter's house on Coburn Rd.

That's when I moved my car up a bit higher and brought my two kayaks to a high point beside the barn. I was relieved to see that the lovely little flock of Bobolink Farm sheep was clustered on the highest knoll in the corner of the flooded field, near the road. They waited patiently—which is all any of us could do. I ran back to let sheep owners Bruce and Carol know the sheep needed a rescue. Then, with my cell phone, I documented the unbelievable scene before me as the river continued to encroach.

As Bruce and Carol arrived with a bale of hay in their canoe, Richard Wiswall and Sally Coleman paddled over from Cate Farm to explore the flooding and offer assistance. The sheep were secured and happily grazing in a lush upper meadow by 7:30 that morning—all trauma of the stranded night seemingly forgotten. We humans would not be so fortunate.

Neighbor Ross Hazel and I paddled kayaks from his land, past my flooded garden, to the cornfield leased by Fairmont Farm, and through the Tofani's lower yard, where we stopped to watch the river racing and churning across the road into all sides of the entrance of Coburn Pond. A dramatic experience, this flood of 2023, made easier by the camaraderie of neighbors and happy sheep.



Bruce Howlett and Carol Dickson bringing hay by canoe.

Shepherding by Canoe

by Carol Dickson & Bruce Howlett, Bobolink Farm

The phone rang at 6:30 am on Tuesday, July 11. It was Renée Carpenter, “deputy shepherd” for the flock we graze on Coburn Farm land, near the Coburn covered bridge: “The sheep are not in the water,” she began, as I struggled to wrap my mind around what she was saying.

Like everyone else, we expected a lot of rain; like many, we didn’t expect so much, or that the Winooski River would rise so high. We had checked this flock at 4:30 on Monday afternoon. The river had risen some, but the sheep were on a patch of higher ground away from river itself, so we figured they were safe.

“But,” Renée continued, “there’s not much dry land left where they are.” It was difficult to envision what needed to happen. Could we even get to Coburn Road? That question was answered when Dave LaPerle (somewhat surprisingly) drove to Mike Brown’s, across the road. He had gotten there from the Village and reported that Route 14 was passable. We loaded canoeing gear, life jackets, and a bale of hay into the truck.

I had neglected to ask Dave which route he had taken, so we initially headed toward Route 2. When we saw the stop signs at the bottom of Towne Hill almost under water, we realized the enormity of the situation, confirmed when we eventually arrived at water’s edge on Coburn Road, well before the official river access.

Canoeing across what was now a flowing lake was amazing and disorienting. All was water. Coburn Road, the Cate Farm field, the 9-foot bridge height sign—all lay beneath swirling eddies.

After a portage across Renée’s lawn, we reached the sheep, restless but fine, on a knoll near a high spot of the road. We gave them hay while we waded into chest-deep water to retrieve the portable electric fencing, then considered next steps. Did we need to ferry the sheep by canoe, make them swim, carry them? Eventually, we simply took their fence down and they scrambled through the brush to Ross Hazel’s yard, where they grazed for two days on higher ground, until we could return with the trailer.

We paddled back (this time through the covered bridge), in awe of the river and feeling grateful for the kindness of neighbors—and for the solar fence charger, which still worked after being submerged!



The sheep sought high ground near Coburn Rd.



Bruce retrieving the portable electric sheep fencing.



The sheep grazing in Ross Hazel's yard.

TOWN WEATHERVANE

BIRTHS

- Sullivan Manning, born to Lauren Melkonian & Raymond Manning II in June
- Rosalie Giron was born to Kayla & Kevin Giron in June
- Ruby Hall, born to Elizabeth & Richard Hall III in July
- Dean Rus, born to Alexandra Freeman and Michael Rus, II in July

MARRIAGES

- Elizabeth Killian and Peter Moore married in May

DEATHS—survivors living in East Montpelier are listed when known

- Gregory Combs, husband of Nancy, died in April
- Matthew Joly, son of Judith, died in June

LAND TRANSFERS

Transfers relative to estate planning or corrective deeds are not included in this listing. For further information, please contact the Town Clerk.

- Fecteau Residential Inc. to Rachael Kittell, a mobile home on Sandy Pines Rd
- Bruce & Claudia Fitch to Kathleen Doner, boundary line adjustment on Fitch Rd & Doner Rd
- Joyce Fowler to Karl Hammer, a mobile home on 1.84 acres on County Rd
- Matthew Grundy to Jaye & Zackariah Weinert, a dwelling on 14.19 acres on Clark Rd
- Blue Hillscape to Peydon Wright & Jacob Audet, a dwelling on 1.6 acres on VT14N
- Edward Joyce to Sarah Cousins, a dwelling on 1.79 acres on Sparrow Farm Rd
- Elizabeth Killian to Austin Fay, .38 acres on Evergreen Ln
- Brian & Elizabeth Ledbetter to Virginia & Helmuth Rogg, a dwelling and 15 acres on County Rd
- Estate of Cynthia Reed to Rebecca Dodge, multi-family dwelling on 5.6 acres on US2
- Laurie & Edward Reynolds to David Cole & Jennifer Boccia, a dwelling and 1.07 acres on Pine Ridge Rd

- Jerome Vaughan to Nicole Clark, a dwelling on .97 acre on Carleton Blvd
- Estate of Janet Wass to Trey Gourley & Matthew Dietz, a dwelling on 1.0 acre on US14N

The following are excerpts from minutes of EM's and WCUUSD's governing boards. Complete minutes are on the town and school websites. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings were held in person with a remote participation option available.

SELECTBOARD

June 5, 2023

Motions Passed

- to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters: entered at 6:36 pm and exited at 7:33 pm.
- to offer the candidate the position of Municipal Coordinator and direct TA to take further steps
- to give revocable authorization to the Recreation Board for four celebrations closing County Road on the two-mile stretch from Barnes Road to Templeton Road on the second Sunday of each month, from July through October, with the Selectboard receiving a report after the first event
- to approve the cemetery services contract between the Town of East Montpelier and J.M. Yard Services, LLC and authorize TA Jenkins to sign the contract
- to approve the updated warrant to impound unlicensed dogs
- to approve the transfer of funds from General Fund to other town funds as outlined in the Selectboard memo
- to authorize TA Jenkins to sign the Municipal Energy Resilience mini-grant agreement
- to approve the permit [WEC service line on Chickering Rd.] and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the motion on behalf of the Board
- to appoint Nik Khosla as the CV Fiber representative alternate

June 19, 2023

Motion Passed

- to approve the contract renewal with Washington County Sheriff's Department for the period 7-1-23 through 6-30-24

- to increase the prices for cemetery services as presented, to double the price for two- and four-grave lots, and to revisit the prices again in one year
- to release the \$10k balance in the Treasurer Transition Fund back to the General Fund
- to approve the following appointments: Patricia Canada, asst. town clerk and asst. town Treasurer; James Mangan, Cemetery Sexton; and Pam Biron to the vacant seat on the Cemetery Committee
- to approve permit 23-020
- to approve permit 23-025
- to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters. The board entered at 8:22 pm and exited at 8:50 pm.
- to approve the FY24 employee wages and salaries as proposed with new pay rates effective 7-1-23

July 17, 2023 (U) Emergency Meeting Motion Passed

- to authorize TA Jenkins and Road Foreman Perry to hire part-time personnel to support the road crew

July 20, 2023 (U)

Discussion

- Updates to Town Plan Chapters 6, 7, 8 (Infrastructure, Economic Development, Housing)

July 24, 2023 (U)

Motions Passed

- to accept the quotes from rbTechnologies for a town office server and cybersecurity training and protection, and to authorize TA Jenkins to sign the quotes
- to accept the quote from rbTechnologies for a new laptop and to authorize TA Jenkins to sign the quote.
- to authorize TA Jenkins to draft a contract for Cathleen Gent to perform services [to design Town Garage replacement] outlined in the provided memo with the not-to-exceed amount of \$5k, and to authorize TA Jenkins to coordinate Gent's work with town staff.
- to authorize TA Jenkins to sign the documents to establish an investment account with Infinex Financial Group

TOWN WEATHERVANE

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

June 6, 2023

Motions Passed

- to return application 23-009, submitted by Doug Scott for the construction of a new 16' by 9' front entry/mud room on existing dwelling, to ZA Brown for processing

WCUUSD

June 7, 2023

Board/Leadership Team Retreat

June 21, 2023

Motions Passed

- to authorize the use of capital reserve funds, not to exceed \$30,000, to develop the necessary scope, budget and bid documents for the Doty generator project in FY 23-24 and FY 24-25 approved capital improvement projects
- to award the bid to supply fuel for the wood chip boilers at WCUUSD for the FY23-24 to Cousineau Forest Products for \$72/ton
- to adopt Policies F3, Fire and Emergency Preparedness; and F4, Access Control and Visitor Management
- to adopt Policy C29, District Equity Policy
- to authorize the board chair to sign the draft letter supporting the concept of walking trail across school district property
- to authorize the board chair to sign IDEA-B Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP) Assurances
- to approve the following new teacher nominations for 23/24 school year: Nathaniel Schwartz, Library/Technology Integrationist (Calais); Lydia Faesy, Nurse (Doty); Michelle Lynch, PT Pre-K Teacher (Rumney); and Christina Pollard, Interventionist (Doty)

- to nominate Zoe Christiansen to attend the 4th VT Community Leadership Summit
- to authorize TA Jenkins to sign the FY24 Grants in Aid Agreement
- to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters: entered at 9:10 pm and exited at 9:30 pm.
- to change the compensation structure for current Zoning Administrator, Tyson Brown, from a part-time, benefit eligible position to an as-needed part-time position at a pay rate of \$40 per hour and authorize TA Jenkins to post the job opening for the Zoning Administrator position as a part-time, benefit eligible position

PLANNING COMMISSION

June 1, 2023

Discussion

- update Land Use Section of Town Plan to meet Energy Plan requirements
- recruitment for acting zoning administrator

Motions Passed

- to take the month of August off.

June 15, 2023

Discussion

- updates to Town Plan Chapters 2-5 (Town Governance and Finance, Community Resources, and Public Services)
- updates to Town Plan Chapters 6, 7, 8 (Infrastructure, Economic Development, Housing)

July 6, 2023

Discussion

- Updates to Town Plan Chapters 5, 6 (Public Services and Infrastructure)

July 20, 2023 (U)

Discussion

- updates to Town Plan Chapters 6, 7, 8 (Infrastructure, Economic Development, Housing)

- to approve the hire of Celia Guggemos, Berlin Principal
- to approve the retirement of Robin Gannon, with great appreciation
- to accept the following resignations: Aaron Boynton, Principal (Berlin); Jeremy Avoli, Physical Education/Health Teacher (U-32); Mary Bove, English Teacher (U-32); Julie-Marie Bristol, Special Education Teacher (Berlin/Calais); Deanna Murray, Pre-K Teacher (Rumney); Sandra Wetzel, Special Education Teacher (Berlin); Shannon Miller, Classroom Teacher (Berlin); and Jake Ploof, School Counselor (U-32)
- to go into executive session to include Superintendent Roy, to discuss a student residence request: entered at 8:51 pm and exited at 9:12 pm
- to accept the administration's recommendation regarding the student residency exception requests
- to go into executive session, to include Superintendent Roy, to discuss negotiation strategy: entered at 9:13 pm and exited at 9:25 pm

School News Coming Soon

Many of you participated in the first phase of the strategic planning for our five-town Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCUUSD). The input gathered in a number of district wide sessions is being compiled and will be presented soon. Then on to the next phase of planning. Stay tuned...



Terry Allen

Christ Church, State Street, Montpelier

Call to Artists

The Parish House Gallery at the Old Meeting House will host an exhibit for local artists that will run from November 1 to January 15. Submission deadline is October 1. The theme is Celebrating the Old Meeting House and Other

Spiritual Homes. For a complete description and submission details, contact wsoliday@gmail.com or artgallery@oldmeetinghouse.org.

Our readers set us straight:

Rose Pelchuk, a Calais resident with many connections to East Montpelier including the family business (Black Rock Coal & Landscape Stones of Vermont) and long-time involvement with the EMFD, referred to this statement in the July-August issue:

Recipe was contributed by Dolores D'Amico to the Country Kitchen Favorites, compiled by the East Montpelier Fire Department Auxiliary in 1978.

"Dolores D'Amico is my mother, and I was the EMFD Auxiliary president when we published that cookbook in July 1993, not 1978. That cookbook and a second one published a few years later were good fundraisers, with half the proceeds donated to the EMFD Truck Replacement Fund. My mom, Dolores, is 92 years old and lives in a local nursing home."

Paulie's Recipe

Easy Blackberry Cobbler (makes its own crust)

INGREDIENTS

½ c. butter
1 c. all-purpose flour
1 c. sugar
1 tbsp. baking powder
1/8 tsp. salt
2/3 c. milk
16 oz. pkg. frozen blackberries,
thawed (or 2 ½ c. fresh berries)

DIRECTIONS Melt butter in a 2-quart casserole. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and milk in a small mixing bowl, mix well.

Pour mixture over melted butter; do not stir. Spoon blackberries over batter; do not stir.

Bake at 350o F. for 45 minutes or until golden brown.

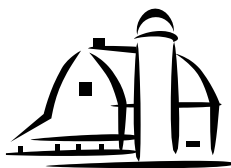
Serves: 8

Contributed by Barbara Ploof From *Gather Round the Table, Recipes from THE OLD MEETING HOUSE*, 2020.



Comment from
Paulie Coburn:

This is an easy dessert. It could be made with any fruit. Sliced apples would be good with a little lemon peel and nutmeg. I've made it with blueberries and that was good too.



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IMPORTANT DATES

Mon. September 4, Town Office closed for Labor Day

Tues.-Wed. Sept. 12-13 – Town Clerk's office closed for professional development.

Mon. Sept. 18, 7:00 pm - Meeting of the E. Montpelier and Calais Historical Societies at the Old Meeting House Parish House in EM Center. Tom Schmidt, author of the new book *Presence in the Center* will be speaking about the history of the Old Meeting House. Also, prints of paintings by James Franklin Gilman will be available for viewing. Free and open to the public.

Sundays in October, 1 pm to 4 pm the Parish House at the Old Meeting House will be open for viewing prints of paintings from the late 1800s by James Franklin Gilman of area homes and farms. Watch for future postings in Front Porch Forum and church news for a special "Round Table Discussion" by families familiar with these locations.

Sat. Oct. 14, 10 am – 3 pm Twin Valley Senior Center annual fall craft fair & flea market, at TVSC

Mon. Oct. 16, 6:00 pm Meeting of the EM and Calais Hist. Societies at the Old Brick Church in EM Village. Potluck

supper first, then program at 7 pm of photographs by Times Argus photographer Jeb Wallace-Brodeur. Free and open to the public. Contact Sandal Cate, sandal.cate@gmail.com for further information.

Note: Tax bills were mailed mid- to late-August. If you have not received yours, please contact the Town Clerk's office.

SIGNPOST SUBMISSIONS DUE

September 25, 2023

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023 SIGNPOST

*Thank you
for your support*

ANNE CHAPMAN & FRANK PRATT

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Conservation Fund Advisory Committee
Development Review Board (DRB)
East Montpelier Fire Department (EMFD)
Four Corners Schoolhouse Assn
Planning Commission (PC)
Recreation Board
Selectboard
WCUUSD Board Meeting
East Montpelier Historical Society

as needed
1st Tues. 7 pm
every Tues. 7 pm
2nd Wed. 7 pm
1st & 3rd Thurs. 7 pm
2nd Mon. 7:15 pm
1st & 3rd Mon. 6:30 pm
3rd Wed. 5:30 pm
TBD

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