

EAST MONTPELIER Signpost

IN THIS ISSUE

Meet the Candidates / 3-5

Green Up Day / 7

Winter Adventure / 8-9

Community Grants/ 10

Volume 36 / Number 4

NEWS OF OUR COMMUNITY

March-April 2026

Town Meeting Day is Tuesday, March 3

BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Voter Registration: at the Town Office Monday through Thursday 9 am - 5 pm, Friday until noon, or at the East Montpelier Elementary School (EMES) polling place on election day. Register online at olvr.vermont.gov

Early Voting: Town and school ballots were sent to all active voters in February. Central Vermont Career Center early ballots must be requested separately. Ballots may be hand delivered to the Town Clerk **through Monday, March 2 at 5 pm** or deposited in the secure drop box outside the office until 5 pm on Tuesday, March 3. Ballots may be delivered to the EMES polling place until 7 pm on March 3.

In-Person Voting: All ballots are available on election day at the polling place. Polls are open 7 am - 7 pm.

Pre-Town Meeting Forums: The WCUUSD informational meeting will take place on Monday, March 2 at 5 pm in room 128/131 at U-32. Remote access is available at tinyurl.com/2w9vu7x6. **The Town Forum** will take place on Monday, February 23. Please check your Town and School Reports to see what will be discussed and voted on.



Plaid is always in style.

Photos by Alex Brown



Making his point.

AND THE TASTY PART...

It's time for us to participate in local democracy at our traditional Town Meeting. It's also a favorite tradition that a potluck lunch follows Town Meeting—both of which will be held at East Montpelier Elementary School.

Lunch is around noon and will follow a similar format to last year. Whether you are continuing a tradition or joining us for the first time, all are welcome.

Last year, proceeds from the potluck were donated to the East Montpelier Food Shelf and the Twin Valley Senior Center. Thank you for supporting these community services.

Potluck, continued p. 15

This issue alerts us to Town Meeting, to be held on the traditional first Tuesday in March. Such predictability is welcome these days, beset as we are by changes from snow to mixed precipitation to ice (writing this as I awaited the predicted January “giant” storm.) Will February warmups mean earlier-than-March sugaring? Will roofs hold up? How low will “feels like” temperatures go? Peril has been in the air, not just in the landscape but in the national and international political environment. So, it is a cheering relief to gather with fellow citizens to mark our ballots, listen, discuss, and enjoy “the best food in town” at the potluck.

Weather challenges also bring about connection and community, as does Town Meeting. For example, Town

Meetings originally were scheduled for farmers’ “down time.” As Andy Christiansen once told me, “When someone is stuck in a snow bank, you don’t care about his politics.”

In these pages, besides candidate postings, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur takes us skiing across the town, Celina Barton talks seeds, and Andy Shapiro features the almost-finished town garage, soon to house our hard-working road crew and their equipment.

We look forward to seeing you at Town Meeting! Come say hello, share your story ideas, and think about joining our volunteer group.

—Long-time volunteer Ann Stanton serves as general manager of the Signpost.

Comings and Goings

For many years Jennifer Boyer has shepherded the online presence of the *Signpost*. She created our first website and has maintained it over time. Because we had a website before the Town did, we originally featured a town calendar and posted many things of general community interest. With the arrival of the official Town website we became, once again, an archive for the *Signpost*, complete with the ability to search each and every *Signpost* issue produced since September 1990.

Now, as Jennifer is stepping aside as webmaster, we thank her for her critical support and service to East Montpelier.

Help us welcome Rosie Laquerre, familiar to all as our town clerk and already a *Signpost* volunteer, who has stepped up to continue Jennifer’s excellent work.

Historical Society Hosts Table at Town Meeting Day

The East Montpelier and Calais Historical Societies will host a table outside of Town Meeting featuring their joint 2026 programs. Please stop by to learn more about activities, to see their publications, to sign up to receive regular emails, and to consider becoming a member. The programs promise to be very interesting! For more information call Sandal Cate, EMHS president, at 802-223-6466.



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They Want Your Vote

Job descriptions taken largely from the VLCT Resource Manual and Vermont Law

TOWN MODERATOR: *one 1-year term*

The moderator is the presiding officer of municipal meetings and shall decide questions of votes taken, except if Australian ballot is used. The moderator shall preserve order in the conduct of business and meetings.



Michael Duane: I am running for re-election for the position of Town Moderator. My wife, Ellen Knoedler, and I have lived in East Montpelier for the past 43 years. We raised our three children in East Montpelier, and we now have two grandchildren who also reside in our town and attend East Montpelier Elementary School.

I am a retired attorney after 35 years of practicing law and now spend my days gardening, babysitting, skiing, hiking, traveling, and cutting wood.

I have been the Town Moderator since 2015. As Moderator, it has been my practice to attend the selectboard meetings when the annual Town Warning is being prepared so that I have an understanding of what issues may arise at the upcoming Town Meeting. I believe I have a pretty good grasp of Robert's Rules of Order and Vermont state laws as they pertain to Vermont Town Meeting procedures. It would be my honor to serve as East Montpelier's town moderator for another term.

SELECTBOARD MEMBER: *one 3-year term and one 2-year term*

Selectboard members are responsible for general supervision of Town affairs and carrying out all duties not assigned to any particular officer. The selectboard convenes Town Meeting and may enact ordinances and rules regulating roads, traffic, animals, and other matters.

Seth Gardner, 2-year term: no statement submitted

Joseph (Joe) Brooks:, 3-year term: I moved to East Montpelier in February 2025 with my wife and our two kids. We feel incredibly fortunate to call this town home. East Montpelier is a special place. I'm running because I



see the deep connections and great potential in our community and the people who make it what it is.

I've spent my career in public service, including more than 20 years in the Army National Guard as a veteran with multiple combat deployments and over 12 activations for responses to natural disasters. I retired in 2024

with the rank of Major. I worked for five years, from 2015 to 2020, at USDA Rural Development, serving the greater New England area. I've also served with the U.S. Department of State as a Public Affairs Officer for the Bureau of Counterterrorism, where I focused primarily on efforts to ease the humanitarian crisis in Syria and countering violent extremism across the globe. I am currently the State Public Affairs Officer and Spokesperson for the Vermont National Guard.

Along the way, I've had the honor of receiving several humanitarian service awards for work supporting communities during disasters and emergencies, such as the Hurricane Maria response in Puerto Rico in 2017 and the COVID response in 2020. I am also fully trained in the Incident Command System for response to emergencies and natural disasters.

Those experiences taught me the importance of preparation, clear communication, fiscal responsibility, and people-centered development—skills I hope to bring to the selectboard.

If elected, my main priorities will be:

- Building community resilience so we're prepared for emergencies and future challenges
- Supporting business revitalization to build healthy and thriving village centers
- Expanding affordable housing options so families, seniors, and young people can continue to live here

Local government works best when it listens, communicates openly, and plans for the long term. I would be honored to earn your support and to serve our community.

Candidates, continued p. 4

Candidates, continued from p. 3

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope to see many of you around town.

LISTER: *one 3-year term*

Listers are responsible for determining the value of the real and personal property in town. This is the value the selectboard or the Town will use to set a tax rate necessary to raise the money to operate the town in the next year. It is also the basis for the determination of the property wealth of the municipality for purposes of setting state education property taxes.

Deborah Fillion: no statement submitted

TOWN AUDITOR: *one 3-year term*

Town auditors are responsible for examining and adjusting the accounts of all town officers and all other persons authorized by law to draw orders on the town treasurer. Secondly, they are to report their findings in writing to the legal voters of the town presenting an easy-to-understand picture of the town's finances.



Carla Neary Occaso: I have been an auditor since longtime resident (and my high school science teacher) David Grundy asked me to take over his post when he retired. I have lived in East Montpelier most of my life and attended local schools. I have felt it my duty to help the town the best I can with the time I have to prepare information pertinent to Town Meeting

Day, alongside the talented and capable auditor Deb Fillion and the diligent and intelligent auditor Ed Deegan. I urge everyone to participate to the extent they can in the town's processes to make sure we conduct ourselves with the biggest heart and the safest public systems available to us.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER: *three 3-year terms*

The Planning Commission is responsible for preparing and maintaining a current town plan and zoning regulations. It reviews significant developments and makes recommendations on issues including land development, transportation, economic and social development, historic, wetland and scenic preservation.

Clarice Cutler: Greetings, neighbors. I've served on the planning commission for the past seven years and am now running for my third 3-year term. The recent passage of



state laws like the Home Act, the Flood Safety Act, the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act, and Act 181 has led to the most interesting conversations of my time on the planning commission. My background is in land conservation and environmental regulation, and I love digging into policy questions with the PC with openness and curiosity. I've learned so much about land use and my neighbors since joining the PC. I ask for your vote because I am eager to continue these conversations and to learn more. I encourage anyone interested in these new laws and their impacts on municipalities to consider joining the planning commission or dropping in on our meetings; we meet every first and third Thursday at 7 pm. Thank you.

Alex Rob: no statement submitted



Rebecca (Becca) Schrader: My name is Becca Schrader, and I am running for Planning Commissioner. I was appointed to the Planning Commission in January to complete a term that was vacated early. I've lived in East Montpelier for almost 11 years, first on Center Road, and now on Tucker Road, near the Calais town line.

I have worked in community and economic development the whole time we've lived here, both professionally and as a volunteer. I worked at the Vermont Community Loan Fund for four years, managing their business resource services and providing coaching to entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations, particularly in childcare, food, and farming businesses. I was a member of the Building Vermont's Future from the Child Up Think Tank in 2018, working on financing solutions for the state's childcare system. In 2019, I moved to USDA Rural Development, working in Community Programs. I worked with non-profit organizations and municipalities, assisting with planning and funding for construction projects and equipment purchases for facilities for schools, hospitals, libraries, museums,

Candidates, continued p. 5

Candidates, continued from p. 4

and municipal buildings. I also worked with water and wastewater treatment systems.

For the town, I served on the Revolving Loan Fund Advisory Committee and was clerk and treasurer for Central Vermont Internet, now CV Fiber.

I currently work as a substitute teacher in the WCUUSD schools, including EMES and U-32, and my children have attended both. I look forward to continuing to use my skills and experience to serve East Montpelier and its residents!

WASHINGTON CENTRAL UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT (WCUUSD)

The WCUUSD board consists of representatives of the towns of Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and Worcester and is responsible for the pre-K-12 school system that serves that area. Voters from the five towns elect all members of the board, as well as a moderator, clerk, and treasurer for the school district.

In keeping with time and space limitations, the Signpost will publish statements from those running as board members from East Montpelier, as well as the non-town-affiliated positions of moderator, clerk, and treasurer when they are up for reelection. It is hoped that information on other candidates will be available on the WCUUSD website.

WCUUSD SCHOOL DIRECTOR (EAST MONTPELIER):
one 3-year term

School directors are responsible for managing the general affairs of the school district by developing policies and hiring able administrators to assure the soundness of the physical assets as well as the educational content and methods presented in student classrooms. They are responsible for convening school district meetings.



David Lowther: I am running for local office because I'd like to do more to support my community. I chose the school board, specifically, because I have experience in school budgeting and governance. I understand many factors come into play when looking at the changes our district is facing in the upcoming

years related to decreasing enrollment, increasing costs, and community impacts.

My education is in geography, and I have experience in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). I've used GIS to evaluate redistricting outcomes for census, school district, zoning, land use, and other boundaries. I've led a small software development company for about 20 years. The experience has been humbling, because with each new client comes new awareness that no two situations are the same; the key to great outcomes is to really listen and understand.

Because I have been a full-time East Montpelier resident for only a few years, I know there is a lot I do not know. As when working with new clients, I've learned to show up without preconceived notions about the "right" way to do things, but rather to be open to learning from folks about what they do and why—and the inclination to understand everything.

My hope is that I can join our school board, learn many things, and, through that learning process—and a bit of applied experience—discover potential solutions to our district's current and future challenges that might not have been apparent otherwise.

WCUUSD SCHOOL MODERATOR: one 1-year term

No Candidate

WCUUSD CLERK: one 1-year term

Melissa Tuller: Along with my husband, Chris, and our two boys, I am proud to call Calais home. Having worked for WCUUSD since 2019, serving as the executive assistant to the superintendent and as the district clerk for the past few years, I have developed a deep understanding of what it takes to run a seamless election.

This role requires precision and trust. I have managed the complex logistics of our school elections—from coordinating with town clerks and printing companies to overseeing the strict protocols for commingling ballots. Because I work alongside the school board daily, I possess the specialized knowledge and experience necessary to ensure our district's democratic process is handled with integrity and transparency. I am ready to continue this important work on day one, and I ask for your vote for district clerk of WCUUSD.

The Town Garage is Taking Shape



Photo by Patty Connor



Photo by Andy Shapiro

Things are moving forward pretty quickly despite the cold. By the time you read this, the first slab should be in place over most of the 1.5 miles of radiant tubing in

the floor. Radiant heat has several advantages: warming trucks in winter from the underside and helping to melt and evaporate water that doesn't go down the trench drain. The radiant floor only requires 100°F water on the coldest days, and the ground source heat pumps can make that temperature very efficiently. The radiant floor will warm ventilation air which is introduced into the building near the floor. Ventilation is "demand controlled," meaning fans only run if it is too humid, if there is CO or VOCs in the building, or if it is too hot in summer. It also warms cold air that comes in when the overhead doors open in winter.

Metal siding is being installed over strapping which is over 4 inches of foil-faced foam and over wood-fiber insulated stud walls. The big propane tank fires up the temporary heat in the building. That tank will go away after construction, and the electric usage will be offset by the electricity generated by the 50 kW solar array on the roof. Installation of metal roofing will begin soon. Once all the slabs are done, mechanical, electrical, and sprinkler systems will be installed. The two huge 11,000-gallon, very heavy sprinkler tanks will also be set in place—riggers using rollers to move them—think building the pyramids.

The fire suppression sprinkler system—which includes a monster pump for a day we hope never comes, and the generator to power it if that day coincides with a power outage—is one of the many things that are required today

for new construction. Though this requirement drives up construction costs, it makes our buildings safer, stronger, and more durable. The added cost for all the efficiency and environmental features is relatively small in the scope of things—averaging less than five percent on other projects where this has been tallied. And the energy features will more than pay for themselves over the life of this building, which we expect will be quite long. In addition, we expect close to \$200,000 in incentives from the federal government (yes, we can still get that) and from Efficiency Vermont.



Photo by Andy Shapiro

The crew for this project has been amazing. Connor Contracting is keeping it moving—from who does what when, to big picture scheduling, to cost management, to all the zillion details of a project this size. Pictured here (left to right) are just a few of the many extraordinary folks making this all happen: Steve Connor, site supervisor; John LaMothe, architect; Ben Toof, project manager; and Guthrie Perry, road foreman, grinning here just thinking about what a great work environment is coming for the crew to work in and for trucks to be maintained in!

—Andy Shapiro is an energy and environmental design consultant for the Town as a volunteer for the Town Energy Committee.

Town Offices

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Town Treasurer

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Town Administrator

Jennifer Devine
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First Constable

Jon Boucher 917-4855

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Assistant: Jon Boucher 917-4855

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Ross Hazel
Jez Harrington
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listers@eastmontpeliervt.org

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Seth Gardener (Temp.) 272-3478

Service Officer

Rachael Grossman 223-3177

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Carl Etnier Scott Hess
Tom Brazier Joe Brooks

Planning Commission

Ben McCall, co2negative@yahoo.com

Development Review Board

Steve Kappel, Chair
sjkappel@gmail.com

WCUUSD Board

Amelia Contrada, acontrada@u32.org
Flor Diaz Smith, fdiazsmith@u32.org
Zach Sullivan, zsullivan@u32.org

State Representative

Ela Chapin, 552-0242
echapin@leg.state.vt.us

Green Up Day is May 2nd



It is more white than green these days, but it is never too early to start thinking about Green Up Day. Deadlines are fast approaching, so start thinking about how you can participate in this time-honored tradition. Green Up Day is Saturday May 2, 9 am – 1 pm at East Montpelier Elementary School (EMES). The iconic green trash bags will be available starting the week of April 20 at Bragg Farm, Dudley's Store, Fox Market, Morse Farm and the Town Office. There

is an app to coordinate and track progress too! Access the app at greenupvermont.org or download at Google Store or Apple Store.

Après Green Up Day celebrations with a Kentucky Derby twist (since they are always on the same day): Breweries throughout Vermont will host derby hat contests. Derby hat entries must be made out of recycled, repurposed and reimagined materials. There were some doozies last year, and it was a whole lot of fun. Go to greenupvermont.org for more info and locations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO HERE IN EAST MONTPELIER

Volunteers are needed beyond the traditional trash collecting along our scenic roads. We need help doing the following:

- staff the EMES collection site for sorting recyclables and transferring trash to trucks graciously provided by the town;
- provide and drive your truck to pick up green bags along our roadsides;
- encourage your business, school, or civic organizations to join the effort.

As a thank you, volunteers may stop by the cafeteria to enjoy lunch and beverages. Children, accompanied by their parents, are welcome.

GET THE KIDS INVOLVED

Contest rules and submission details are available at greenupvermont.org.

- Writing Contest – write a creative essay, speech, or poem—the sky's the limit. Deadline is April 1.
- Video Contest – create a 30 to 60-second 'commercial'—winners could make it onto television. Deadline is April 1.
- Jingle Contest – compose a 15 to 30-second tune to inspire people to Green Up. Deadline April 1.

DONATE WITH YOUR TAXES

When completing your tax forms this year, remember that you may donate to Green Up Vermont on Line 23 of your Vermont return. Your generous contributions to this program help keep Green Up Day alive.

PARTICIPATE AHEAD OF GREEN UP DAY

There are many ways to participate, with something for every talent. Work in groups or on your own, with the whole class or a group of friends – the main thing is to have fun and share your love for Green Up Day! Find details for all programs at the Green Up website at greenupvermont.org

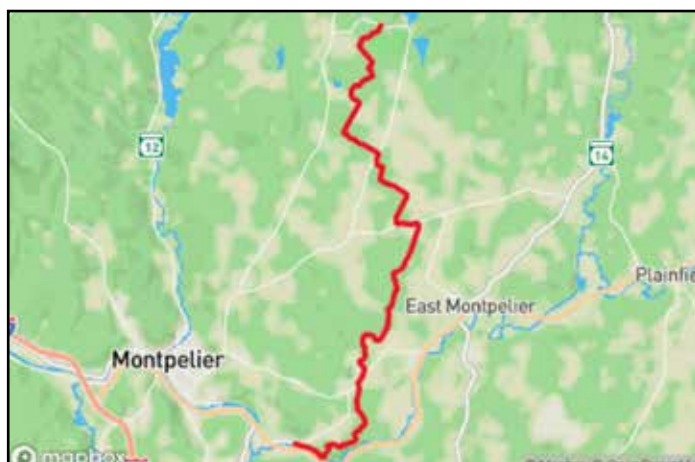
- Mentor Program – leadership opportunities look great on resumes or college applications;
- Team Building – do a pre-game/practice Green Up, great for camaraderie;
- NEW **greenSTEM** – innovation challenge meets science fair with an environmental focus to find solutions for dealing with our trash.

—Christine Beling, Green Up Coordinator for East Montpelier

The Great East Montpelier Winter Adventure

Story and Photos by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

While walking East Montpelier trail segments over the years, I've often thought it would be fun to put them together in one big outing, from north to south. As a new East Montpelier Trails board member, I decided to do just that. Over the summer, though, I mostly mountain biked. Before I knew it, there was snow on the ground, meaning I'd need to postpone. Or would I? How about a ski traverse of the town? On paper, it looked feasible, but would trails designed primarily for foot travel work as a ski route? Only one way to find out.



Map showing the route through East Montpelier.

In early January, on a single-digit, calm, and clear morning, I dropped my car at the base of Gallison Hill. My wife drove me and the skis to Haggett Road, and I set off. At the beginning, ice-laden beech branches and leaves hung over the trail. Crashing through them sounded like a chorus of rattlesnakes. Emerging into corn fields near the Esther Salmi memorial bench was a welcome relief. (Deeper snow in open fields generally provided the best skiing of the journey.)

Reaching Templeton Road, near the new town garage, I was pleased to find that I could easily ski along the edge of the road to the next trail segment. Ah, a challenge within the challenge: do the entire trip without removing my skis!

Having never been on the Templeton Road segment, I was grateful that someone else had already skied it, making for easy route-finding and fun skiing. Then, crossing Center Road, I tackled that section, which ends on Dodge Road. Having walked it, I knew that this was going to be tough going through the steep ups and downs of the terrain. Using some wildly ugly techniques, I managed to survive the dicey descents in one piece.

From Dodge Road, I made my way down Johnson

Road to the Mallory Brook trailhead, where I ran into Alex Brown, the trail steward. We both agreed that this segment would be the trip's crux. Descending to Mallory Brook was actually much easier than I expected, and the brook crossing occurred on solid ice bridges. However, the next half mile or so was definitely not for the faint of heart, with numerous steep gully crossings, stairs and sharp climbs. Again, some unorthodox and creative techniques got me through unscathed.



A rest and great views from Fairmont Farm



Bridge by Bobolink Farm property

Dreaming Spring

By Cheri Staples



Photo by Cheri Staples

From the Cherry Tree Hill Road spur to Bobolink Farm was my favorite part of the day—open woods, gentle descents, and sweeping views. I tramped across Towne Hill Road (the only pavement of the day) and skied along Schoolhouse Road to the Karen Clark Trail, also a new section for me. Although this route down to a wetland would be fun in good snow, it was fairly terrifying to negotiate its icy condition that day, so I was relieved to emerge safely onto the groomed trails at U-32. There, the wide and gently-groomed trail went across the school's wooded grounds and then dropped down to the Winooski River on the Cross Vermont connector trail. When at last I reached the base of Gallison Hill, my phone reported that I had traveled about 11 miles—a trip I accomplished on regular skinny skis with no edges.

Thankful for the impressive work by dedicated trail volunteers over the years, I reflected on how lucky we are to live in a town with such beautiful terrain and generous landowners who allow access to it. Now I'm looking forward to a summer north-south hike. And maybe, just maybe, who knows, someday there will be an east-west route to try.



Open field skiing south of Haggett Road

—Jeb Wallace-Brodeur is a professional photographer whose work features his observations as he enjoys the out-of-doors on a bike, on foot, and on skis.

*there are times when dreaming seems the
only answer
when spring never comes
and the clutch of cold every morning
lingers through the day
the green grass grows achingly distant
and the northwest wind still comes from
the Pole*

*dreaming tiny mint green leaves feathering
the branches
pale spring beauties topping last year's
dried leaves
thrush song haunting the trees*

*dreaming green grass rushing to the sky
Deneb, Vega, and Altair rising in the evening
warm, warm misty rains*

*dreaming lilacs scenting the warm breeze
the first white of shad against the
darkening trees
waves of pale red reaching up the mountains*

*dreaming the rich earth hungry for seed
cows on fresh grass and the first mowing
heifers testing the pasture's freedom*

*dreaming spring
and it comes*

Building a Resilient East Montpelier

Community Grants & Housing Investments

Over the past year, East Montpelier has been granted a focused set of state and federal grants supporting disaster recovery, housing stability, energy affordability, and long-term resilience. Together, these efforts reflect careful stewardship of public resources and a commitment to meeting practical community needs.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT (MPG) NORTH MONTPELIER RESILIENCE & REVITALIZATION

East Montpelier was awarded a \$29,500 Municipal Planning Grant to undertake the North Montpelier Resilience & Revitalization Master Plan, a community-led effort focused on the future of our historic village centered around the beloved Singing Bridge. The plan integrates housing, flood resilience, infrastructure, food systems, and village life into a single, actionable framework. The work supports seniors aging in place, creates opportunities for young families and returning neighbors, incentives for small businesses, penalties for closing the commercial center, and strengthens the village core as a walkable, working center of community life. The selectboard has asked the MPG Steering Committee to raise the required \$3,000 local match through community fundraising.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT DISASTER RECOVERY (CDBG-DR)

East Montpelier received \$100,000 in competitive CDBG-DR planning funds to conduct a feasibility study for shovel-ready intergenerational, affordable, and resilient housing at the Orchard Valley School campus. The study will, in part, analyze site conditions, infrastructure capacity, adjacent properties, and neighborhood impacts to assess how housing at this location could strengthen long-term community resilience.

DREAM (DECARBONIZATION, RESILIENCE, AND ENERGY AFFORDABILITY IN EAST MONTPELIER)

East Montpelier received an \$85,010 DREAM grant through the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency

and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, administered by the Vermont Department of Public Service. Working with Collective Well Foundation and Efficiency Vermont, the Town is conducting outreach and a housing stock survey to improve energy affordability, reduce emissions, and strengthen household resilience. Early findings indicate that nearly all homes would benefit from weatherization—especially air sealing and insulation—and that most homes still rely on fossil fuels for heating. Using these data, the Town and Collective Well are pursuing additional grants to support townwide weatherization and help residents transition to renewable heating systems. The DREAM team is also exploring the option of returning \$263,700 in Downstreet funds to East Montpelier to provide weatherization grants for the most energy-intensive homes, and distribute the rest on a first-come, first-served basis.

DOWNSTREET HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

In 2023, the selectboard directed East Montpelier's Revolving Loan Fund toward housing needs and entered into a partnership with Downstreet Housing & Community Development. A total of \$263,700.78 was transferred on October 17, 2023. Until October 4, 2026, these funds are reserved exclusively for East Montpelier residents. After that date, the funds will become part of Downstreet's regional revolving financing pool.

We should take advantage of this opportunity in the next nine months while we have it. The funds support low- and moderate-income homeowners through grants or loans for essential repairs that address health, safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency. Programs available to residents include the Green Mountain Home Repair Program (up to \$5,000 per household) and access to VHIP 2.0, which offers 0% interest loans up to \$50,000 per unit for affordable rental rehabilitation.

This partnership strengthens housing stability while advancing the Town's commitment to equity, resilience, and long-term affordability.

—*Celina Moore Barton worked with East Montpelier's town administrator to obtain these grants.*

Community Volunteers Needed

Green Mountain Transit (GMT) is looking for caring, dependable community members to join our Volunteer Community Driver Program. Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles to provide essential transportation for neighbors who need help getting to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other important destinations that may not be served by regular bus routes. GMT's Volunteer Community Drivers make a real, life-changing difference for the people served.

We value your time and commitment. Volunteers receive a TAX FREE mileage reimbursement at \$0.725 per mile, helping to offset vehicle costs. Best of all, your schedule is tailored to your availability—you choose when and how often you want to drive. Whether you're available multiple days a week or just occasionally, your support matters; and every little bit makes a tremendous difference in the lives of our neighbors.

This program is a wonderful opportunity for retirees or semi-retirees to stay engaged, while maintaining independence. It's a great way to give back to our community in a practical, heartfelt manner.



For more info:
Michelle Lynn Thomas,
mthomas@ridegmt.com
802-207-4193

What's New at TVSC

The Twin Valley Senior Center is hosting an AARP-sponsored **Tax Preparation Clinic**.

This free service is offered through April 10 and is available to taxpayers of all ages. No AARP membership is required. Appointments required. Call to schedule or to learn more.



New to TVSC are the services of a licensed and experienced **beautician**. Cost to have your hair cut is \$25. Mondays, 10 am to 3 pm. Appointments required.

Jump into a fun day of **Gelli Plate Printmaking** with Nancy Chapman. This printmaking is one of the trendiest and easiest printmaking techniques there is. It allows you to make monoprints without the need for a large, expensive press. There are so many ideas and techniques to experiment with! Saturday, March 14, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm. For ages 12+ and the cost is \$25 – cash or check made out to Twin Valley Senior Center. Maximum class size is 14. RSVP directly to Nancy via phone, text or email: (802) 272-7940, naiko7@yahoo.com

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Hours: Mon./Wed./Fri., 9 am – 2 pm
Phone: 802-223-3322



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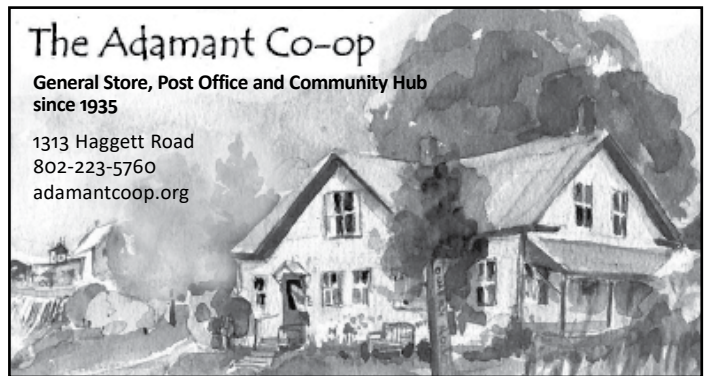
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The following are excerpts from minutes of EM's and WCUUSD's governing boards. Complete minutes are on the town and school websites. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings were held in person with a remote participation option available.

SELECTBOARD

December 1, 2025

- Agreed to allow WCUUSD to distribute ballots to those on town check lists for its Annual Meeting via U.S. Mail
- Heard organization descriptions and requests which may appear as FY27 articles for funding requests
- Appointed Alex Rob as CVRPC rep and Clarice Cutler as CVRPC alternate rep

December 15, 2025

- Agreed the SB has no objection to Act 250 exemption for the proposed 10 lot residential subdivision on Goddard SPE property in East Montpelier
- Heard Montpelier Senior Center funding request
- Authorized the clerk to mail Annual Meeting ballots to all active, non-challenged voters

January 25, 2026

- Appointed Rebecca Schrader to the planning commission for the remainder of the term
- Accepted modified bid from rbTech for 5 computers and 1 piece of network equipment for up to \$7,000

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

January 6, 2026

- Approved, without conditions, Application 25-051 by Casella Waste

Management Inc. to construct accessory structure at 418 US2, Parcel ID 10-005.000

WCUUSB

December 3, 2025

- Heard public comments concerning process of moving forward with plans to vote on the configuration of district schools
- Following an executive session, the board stated that they heard the appeal and agreed that the policy and procedure were followed as written concerning the personnel matter
- Adopted policies C15 Student Conduct and Discipline, C45 Bus Discipline, D8 Selection of Library Materials, and rescinded D22 Library Media Center Selection & Reconsideration and B31 Educator Supervision & Evaluation: Probationary Teachers

December 17, 2025

- Heard and discussed budget presentation by superintendent for district in its current configuration, and proposed budget for the 3 elementary school option
- Passed motion to adopt the configuration model of 3 multi-town elementary schools, 1 middle school and 1 high school with the amendment that if any of the towns vote not to close a school, this board and administration will honor the vote. Motion carried 7 to 6.
- Passed motion to close Doty Memorial School and cease using Doty Memorial School facility for the purpose of providing direct

instruction to students, effective June 30, 2026

- Passed motion to submit the issue of closure of Doty Memorial School to the voters of the Town of Worcester, said question to be warned in the following form: "Shall the WCUUSD close the Doty Memorial School effective June 30, 2026?"
- Passed motion to close Calais Elementary School and cease using Calais Elementary School facility for providing direct instruction to students, effective June 30, 2026
- Passed motion to submit the issue of closure of Calais Elementary School to the voters of the Town of Calais, said question to be warned in the following form: "Shall the WCUUSD close the Calais Elementary School effective June 30, 2026."
- Directed the clerk to put the questions approved at this meeting to the voters of Worcester and Calais at a special election on Feb. 10, 2026
- Passed motion to mail Town Meeting ballots to all registered voters in our towns
- Agreed to participate in the Winooski Valley School Choice Lottery, and to accept no more than 10 students, and send no more than 40, for the 2025-26 school year
- Approved copier bid from Symquest and approved the proposed tax-exempt lease with M.S.T. Government Leasing, LLC for the purposes of refinancing, and funding photocopy equipment leases not to exceed \$199,322.47
- Approved resignations of Dakota Garrow, U-32 PE/health teacher

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(effective January 9, 2026) and Rebecca Tatistcheff, U-32 principal (effective June 30, 2026), with gratitude

- Approved hire of long-term substitutes: Hayden Roberge, LTS physical education teacher, U-32 and Blakely Gilmore, LTS Grade 2/3, EMES
- Approved extended leave of absence for Christa Danyew, U-32 para educator

January 7, 2026

- Elected Melissa Tuller WCUUSD clerk and increased pay to \$2K.
- Approved the budget warning language
- Set dates for Informational Meetings: February 4 at Doty School and February 7 at Calais School
- Adopted Policy D23 Selection of & Access to Instructional Materials
- Accepted the resignation of John Boyd, Special Educator at U-32

January 21, 2026

- Set the budget for the FY27 for WCUUSD for \$43,115,896 as amended to include the position of Director of Student Services at U-32 by increasing the budget
- Approved announced tuition rate for the FY 2026-27 school year as \$22,300 for elementary tuition and \$23,351 for secondary tuition
- Approved the job description for WCUUSD Transition and Community Engagement Coordinator
- Following an executive session, approved the contract for Superintendent Dellinger-Pate, and authorized board chair to sign

WCUUSD Presents Budget

We are living in a time of real uncertainty for public education in Vermont. With the passage of Act 73, the state’s sweeping education reform law, significant changes lie ahead—changes that will affect how our schools are funded and how they may ultimately be governed. While much remains unknown, and it may be a year or more before the full picture becomes clear, what is certain is that this moment matters deeply—for our students, our communities, and the values we hold together.

It is also important to be clear about why we are doing this work. The budget before you is not a reaction to Act 73. It is the result of years of intentional effort to work toward our Strategic Plan and our shared beliefs. Long before this legislation, we committed ourselves to equity, well-being, excellence in learning, and transparent leadership. Those commitments have guided every conversation, every difficult decision, and every choice reflected here. Even in uncertain times, we cannot stand still. We must continue to be thoughtful stewards of public resources while remaining focused on what matters most: creating safe, welcoming learning environments and meaningful experiences that prepare all students for their futures.

The budget we are asking you to consider reflects those values. It is grounded in the belief that every student—no matter which town they live in—deserves equitable access to high-quality instruction, support services, and opportunities to learn and grow. We have also remained deeply mindful of the financial strain many taxpayers are experiencing. Balancing equity, sustainability, and fiscal responsibility has required difficult and thoughtful choices. Reconfiguring from five elementary schools to three multi-town schools allows us to better align our resources with our values—supporting stable class sizes, full-time support staff in every school, stronger and more collaborative teaching teams, and equitable access to programs and services across our district. This approach strengthens what we can offer every student while helping ensure the long-term viability of our district.

When we look ahead, we do not see only change—we see possibility. We recognize the discomfort and sense of loss that change can bring, and we honor those feelings. At the same time, we hold hope: hope grounded in care for our students and staff, belief in our communities, and a shared commitment to a strong, equitable, and sustainable future.

The future of education in Vermont may be uncertain, but the purpose behind this budget is not. With humility and hope, we offer it as a reflection of who we are, what we believe, and the future we are working to build together.

—Chair Flor Diaz Smith on behalf of the WCUUSD board of directors



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Seed Fever: Why We Start Gardening in February (Even Though We Can't Dig into the Soil Until May)

by Celina Moore Barton

Every year, often in February, when the sparkle of the holidays has faded, and it's snowing again, we turn to daydreams of spring to help us through the cold. We know what to expect, and still, seed fever hits. One minute we're reheating the teakettle and the next we're covering the kitchen table with colorful catalogs. In our heroic and necessary optimism, we're sure that this year, we'll finally master the Brussels sprout, grow enough cherry tomatoes, or dry our own herbs. Our courage and wistfulness team up, and then small, beautiful packets of hope arrive with joy and promise for the future.

All over East Montpelier, people sketch garden plans on paper napkins or the backs of grocery lists. Yogurt containers accumulate, and the stack of egg cartons on top of the fridge starts to whisper, "I could hold SO many tomato starts!"

Attending the NOFA-VT Winter Conference does not help. If anything, it fertilizes the ailment, for which we don't actually want a remedy. While the snow and ice surround us, we sit in a room full of farmers and gardeners. We swap seeds and stories, trade tips and share wisdom. We leave more convinced than ever that tending our gardens fills our bellies, supports neighbors, while caring for ourselves and our communities.

So, if you find yourself ordering more than you "need," overestimating the amount of sun in your yard, or thinking you could certainly squeeze in a few more plants per square foot than recommended, it's not madness, it's Vermont. Our gardens may still



Image of woodcut by Myrrh Brooks.

be asleep under a foot of snow, but community and all the seeds we nourish continue to flourish.

Happy planting, friends, and remember, even if your seedlings fail to thrive, someone in town will have enough to share.

—*Celina Moore Barton grew up in East Montpelier and has returned; she is a recent Signpost volunteer.*

SEED SWAPPING RESOURCES

Kellogg-Hubbard Library (Montpelier)

Check library calendar or ask staff about seasonal seed swaps and gardening programs.

Richmond Free Library Seed Library 802-434-3036;

richmondfreelibraryvt.org/at-the-library/borrow/seed-library; Community seed library with vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Seeds are free; donations welcome.

Northfield Public Library Seed Library

Open-access seed library is available to the public.
northfieldpubliclibrary.org/seed-library-policy-and-details/

Vermont Seeds (Thetford Center) vermontseeds.com/;

Regionally adapted seed varieties grown for New England conditions.

UVM Extension Master Gardener Program

Helpline: 1-800-639-2230; uvm.edu/extension; Email: master.gardener@uvm.edu; Gardening advice, seed saving guidance, and connections to local programs.

During the month of March many local libraries feature seed swaps/giveaways. Check with the libraries above or other local libraries.

A Final Note: Seed libraries and swaps rely on trust, generosity, and shared stewardship. Take what you need, grow what you can, and return seeds or knowledge when possible. This is how resilient local food systems take root.

Potluck, continued from p. 1

Many thanks to our Potluck Lunch sponsors:

Hunger Mountain Coop, Shaw's/Berlin, Market 32/Price Chopper, Red Hen Bakery, Capitol Grounds/802 Coffee Roasters

If you would like to participate, here's how...

- RSVP.** Let me know if you plan on attending Potluck Lunch and how many will be in your party so that we can plan for food. Email: empotluck@gmail.com
- Eating Well.** Bring a main entrée (no soups) and label it non-vegetarian, vegetarian, or vegan. List ingredients for those who have allergies. Please prepare enough to feed at least eight people. Bring entrées to the school cafeteria prior to the meal where volunteers will receive them. We will provide bread, salad, desserts, beverages, and napkins.
- No Cleanup!** Since we will not be using the dishwasher, please bring your own plates, glasses, forks, knives, and spoons as well as a serving spoon for your entrée. You will take your serving dishes, utensils, and cutlery home with you to be washed.
- The Best Deal.** If you are unable to bring an entrée, you can purchase lunch (\$10 suggested donation) *but* please let me know this when you RSVP in advance.
- Helping Out.** Email me at empotluck@gmail.com if you can volunteer with setup, serving, and cleanup.

Town Meeting begins at 9:30 am at East Montpelier Elementary School. We look forward to seeing you there.

—Erin Clark, Town Meeting Potluck Chair

ANNUAL DOG LICENSING IS FROM JANUARY 2 THROUGH APRIL 1, 2026

Dog licensing occurs on a yearly basis. This ensures that rabies vaccines are up to date and helps town officials identify and/or re-home your pup if it gets away from you.

Licenses are \$11 for spayed or neutered dogs and \$17 for unaltered dogs.

Licensing is quick and EASY and may be done by phone, online, or at the Town Office. Call to confirm what's needed. Personal visits are encouraged! Dogs are welcome, and treats are available for our canine visitors and their humans. Please call 802-223-3313 with any questions about licensing your dog.

IS YOUR DOG #1? THIS COULD BE THE YEAR!

Every dog licensed between Jan. 2 and Apr. 1 will be automatically entered into a random drawing to win a prize package including the #001 tag, bragging rights, and a treasure trove of canine loot. The winning pooch's photo will be posted in the Town Office reception area, with a mention in the *Signpost*.

—Rosie Laquerre, EM town clerk



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CALENDAR

Mon. Feb 23, 6:30 pm, Pre-Town Meeting Forum, EM Town Office - with opportunity to attend virtually. See eastmontpeliervt.org for details.

Mon. March 2, 5 pm, WCUUSD Informational Meeting of U-32, room 128/13; virtual link: tinyurl.com/2wg9vu7x6

Tues. March 3, 7 am - 7 pm, Polls Open, EMES library

Tues. March 3, 9:30 am, Town Meeting, EMES auditorium

Tues. March 16, 6 pm, Meeting of the EM & Calais Historical Societies, Old Brick Church, EM Village. Potluck followed by "Reflections on Town Meetings." Free & accessible to all. For more information, contact Sandal Cate at 802-223-6466.

Mon. Apr. 20, 6 pm, Meeting of the EM & Calais Historical Societies, E. Calais Rec. Hall, just off Rte. 14. Potluck, sugar-on-snow dessert, presentation on the French & Indian War with enactors in costume. Free & accessible to all.

Sat. May 2, 9 am - 1 pm, Green Up Day, Drop off at East Montpelier Elementary School

Sat. May 2, 10 am - 1 pm, Green Up Day, Volunteer Lunch, East Montpelier Elementary School Cafeteria



Photo by Patty Connor

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**MAY-JUNE SIGNPOST SUBMISSIONS DUE:
MONDAY, MARCH 30**

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

1st Tues. 6:30 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
1st & 3rd Wed. 6:15 pm
3rd Mon. 6 pm

Town Office Building
EMFD Community Room
Four Corners Schoolhouse
Town Office Building
Elementary School
Town Office Building
Rotating Locations (check website)
Old Brick Church/E. Calais