



A moose in its element in Grafton County in a photo taken on July 9.

JO PHOTO BY IAN CLARK

Belt-tightening after accounting error

by Linda Buermeyer
BRADFORD—Belt-tightening, officer appointments, a resignation, a visit from a state senator, and many other items filled the July 9 meeting attended by board chair Meroa Benjamin and members Jarrod Kosakowski, and Carole Taylor. Jean Carlan attended remotely.

Josh Allen was unable to

appear until later in the meeting.

Nikki Tomlinson, interim treasurer, and Ashley Colbeth, assistant treasurer, reported that early that morning it was discovered that water department funds of \$837,000, stemming from a federally funded water project in 2011, had been erroneously moved to the general fund at that time.

It must now be placed in its own investment account which means that what was thought to be the town's cash availability of \$1.6 million is actually about \$750,000.

After reviewing expenses both present and anticipated, and conferring with the auditors, some belt-tightening is expected until tax revenue starts arriving later this year.

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Embracing the past in the modern age

by Cynthia Shelton
A reporter's angst about attire was entirely unwarranted at a recent interview with Haverhill's own living history enthusiasts, Adam and Esther Hodges-LeClaire. They were sensibly garbed in contemporary T-shirts, not layered 18th century costumes.

Adam and Esther have created niche careers doing

what they each love. For Adam, that means hand-sewing period-authentic clothing and giving interactive history presentations.

Esther spent over a decade as an architect in Boston. She now restores and builds homes as the founder of Johnston House Studio. The two both parent their young son Felix, and springer spaniel, Atlas.

After watching Adam's fast-talking, info-rich presentation "Are You a Pirate?" on YouTube, there seemed some danger of a quick judgement of a reporter's mismatched duds.

"Dress in any period is a factor of three main things," Adam said in the video. "Local, occupational, and personal."

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Historic Bath store reopens

by Eileen Nickles
BATH—After a five-year hiatus, one of the oldest general stores in the United States is back in business under new ownership.

Paul and Elisabeth Girouard opened The Brick Store in Bath on July 1.

The husband-wife duo formally acquired the store in April, Elisabeth told the *Journal Opinion* via email.

"[We have] come to love this community over many years of visiting and wanted to invest in something that would serve it for years to come."

Before its 2021 closure, The Brick Store was renowned as the oldest continually operating general store in America since its construction around 1804.

"It wasn't just another business opportunity," Elisabeth shared. "It was an opportunity to preserve something that has been part of Bath's identity for nearly two centuries."

According to The Brick Store website, the building, which is now listed on the National Register of Historic

Places, was constructed in 1804. It was owned by sons of Jeremiah Hutchins, a prominent settler of Bath. Although the exact date that the store opened is not known, one was operating by 1814.

At one point the Brick Store also served as post office for Bath residents, with the original mailboxes still a part of the historic charm of the store today.

"Since its construction, The Brick Store has been a general merchandise store, but ...[it] has [also] been much more than a mere mart for the sale of goods," noted the narrative submitted as part of National Register of Historic Places application. "It has been ... a place for social exchange, passing of amenities and sometimes not."

Bath resident and artist Craig Pursley told the *JO* that

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Groton HUB celebrates community connections

by Amy Ash Nixon
GROTON—A \$2.85 million U.S. Department of Agriculture Community Connect grant to NEK Broadband has seen the establishment of a vibrant new community resource where local assistance and education programs are already thriving.

The new community technology center was designed to "expand digital access and help residents take advantage of reliable high-speed internet, remote work opportunities, telehealth services, online education and other digital resources," according to a recent announcement by Vermont Community Broadband Board about the opening of the Groton Connectivity HUB.

Christa Shute, executive director of NEK Broadband/CVFiber, in recent days told

the *Journal Opinion*, "The Groton Connectivity Hub was first used as a meeting space in February and began pilot programs for area partners in April with an official opening on June 27."

The space, located at 1334 Scott Highway, is on the ground floor of a Rural Edge Affordable Housing building, Shute said. "The building is on the Historic Register and the hub has access from both the outside and an inside hallway. We are very grateful for the partnership with Rural Edge and the leadership of Patrick Shattuck."

To spread word about the new technology resource center, Shute said they have made announcements on social media, asked the Town of Groton to spread the work, put up posters at the state forest campgrounds and at

Upper Valley Grill & General Store.

There is no cost to use the new hub.

There is a staff member on site during the following scheduled hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Wednesdays 9-11 a.m., Thursdays 9-11 a.m. and 3-6 p.m., and Fridays 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

"If space is booked during off hours, there is a short meet and greet ahead of time to assist with access and set up technology use," Shute added.

NEK Broadband/CVFiber staff member and HUB Manager Allison Ingerson said Northeast Kingdom Community Action has been using the space to help clients apply for housing and for a digital access program.

"The Groton Planning Commission has been using

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Tulloch gets resentenced

by Damien Fisher
InDepthNH.org

NORTH HAVERHILL—Instead of life in prison without parole, Robert Tulloch will be 62 by the time he is eligible for release in connection with the murders of two Dartmouth College professors in 2001.

That is the same age Half Zantop was when Tulloch murdered him in 2001.

Tulloch agreed to a new sentence Monday during a hearing in Grafton Superior Court in North Haverhill on his two first-degree murder convictions. The original life sentence without parole is now 45-years to life, giving Tulloch the opportunity to be paroled after he serves 20 more years in prison.

Tulloch was 17 when he and his friend, James Parker, 16, randomly picked the Etna home of Dartmouth College

professors Half and Susanne Zantop, 55, to carry out their crimes. Their daughter, Dr. Veronika Zantop, testifying via Webex, told Grafton Superior Court Judge Lawrence MacLeod there is no justice in giving Tulloch anything less than a life sentence for his crimes.

"He planned, rehearsed, and in an utterly cold-blooded, and in an extremely predatory manner, slaughtered my parents. This wasn't a crime of passion or retribution. He wasn't using substances. He wasn't psychotic. There was just sheer depravity," Veronika Zantop said.

Tulloch accepted a sentence of life without parole when he pleaded guilty in 2002. Parker got 25 years to life when he pleaded guilty to second-degree murder charges, and he is currently

free.

Tulloch's attorney, Richard Guerriero, who also represented Tulloch in 2002, said Monday the teen pleaded guilty 25 years ago to spare the Zantop family any more suffering they would likely experience if the case went to trial.

"His very reason was that he recognized the pain and trauma that he had caused, and he didn't want to cause any further pain and trauma," Guerriero said.

But Tulloch has been trying for at least the chance for a lesser sentence since 2018. Years of litigation over the constitutionality of life sentences for minors resulted in MacLeod finding last year that such sentences violate constitutional rights.

Monday was scheduled to be the first of three days of

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Bath store owners, Paul and Elisabeth Girouard, who purchased The Brick Store in April, are shown in front of the store with their children, Sidney, Anthony, Cora, and Lucas, on July 8.

JO PHOTO BY DELORES DREW



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SATURDAY
NIGHT RACING
JULY 18
SEE AD
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• Groton

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the space for their monthly meetings with 5-8 people attending and have recently begun using the 65” screen and video camera for virtual meetings,” said Ingerson. “They really enjoy the space for the privacy, convenience, and for the ability for virtual meetings.”

AA meetings will be held in the space starting July 19 at 9 a.m. and will be hosted weekly at the hub.

“[The coordinator] has been working hard to spread the word and will begin using the space on Sunday for weekly open AA meetings both in-person and via Zoom.”

The Groton Library also uses the space for social services partnerships, she said.

“We sporadically have walk-ins needing to use the WiFi for a quick email,” Ingerson said. “One family camping at the state parks utilized the privacy pod to enroll in college classes for the fall.”

According to Shute, Groton is part of a 72-town communications union district that serves as NEK Broadband and CVFiber. Towns were invited to demonstrate community interest in a connectivity hub and had to have limited internet ability throughout the town.

“The grant application to the USDA Community Connect grant was for roughly 250 addresses inside of Groton all of which had less than 10/1 Mbps service. Mike Gaiss, the governing board representative for Groton for the communications union district, spearheaded surveys, interviews, and letters of support for the grant application,” Shute said. ““What the hub does is provide an opportunity for residents with lower income or folks visiting the area with a place to connect for free. In addition, it provides devices that people may not have at home such as computers and conferencing options.”

Since the hub opened its doors, a number of organizations and boards are using the space already, said Shute, among them NEKCA, AA, the Groton Planning Commission and Vermont State Parks, the center is already “seeing good early flow from state park visitors,” reported Shute. She stressed that the grand opening only just took place a few weeks ago, and, “The most important thing now is making people aware of it to drive usage.”

The \$2.85 million USDA grant that funded the new initiative “is all tied to the service area of Groton and parts of South Ryegate,” Shute explained. She said the Groton Selectboard “has been instrumental in supporting NEK Broadband-focused initiatives over the last six years.”



A group of people pose for a photo in at the grand opening of the Groton Connectivity HUB on June 27. The hub includes shared workspace, meeting space, computer workstations, and a privacy pod for accessing telehealth, all with access to high-speed fiber internet.

COURTESY PHOTO

A number of letters of support for the grant were filed several years back when NEK Broadband/CVFiber first embarked on the initiative.

“As principal at Blue Mountain Union School, there have been several occasions where families and students have had their access to school limited by their lack of reliable internet service,” former Blue Mountain Union co-principal Emili Knisley wrote at the time. “Having reliable broadband would increase the ability for all students to equitably access the education and services available to them through the school district, and would enable them to work on their homework in the evenings.”

Letters of support also came in from the Buckaroos of 302 snowmobile club, Cottage Hospital, the Groton Selectboard, the Ryegate Selectboard, Orange East Supervisory Union, RuralEdge, the Groton-Ryegate Fast Squad, Northeastern Vermont Development Association, the Groton Free Public Library, South Ryegate Public Library, Little Rivers Health Care, the Northern Forest Center, Mapek Engineering LLC and The Old Scott Barn, the Northeast Kingdom Collaborative, NEKCA, the Groton Highway Department and many more local, state agencies, businesses and organizations, all of whom urged approval of the grant making the project possible.

Phyllis Ann Eaborn, of South Ryegate, submitted a handwritten letter of support.

“I have no computer service at my home ... I read about the NEK(Broadband) in our town report. I am hoping you can send me info via mail (underlined). It is important to me and those who follow me to have computer access. Please keep me informed of your

progress. I wish you and your group luck.”

She signed her letter, “On the end of the line, in South Ryegate down near the river.”

The core services and tech availability at the new hub include free WiFi, a 65” 4k UHD interactive display for presentations and conference calls, a video conference camera, computers, workspaces, free 8x11 color printing tech support, a privacy pod, virtual meeting set-up, a public calendar and space reservation form, water and coffee available for scheduled events and public use, and smart door locks for keyless convenience, remote monitoring and easy guest access.

The Groton hub is the first of its kind in the district.

In congratulating NEK Broadband/CVFiber on the opening of the Groton HUB, VCBB Executive Director Christine Hallquist said, “Broadband is more than connecting homes and

businesses. It’s connecting people to opportunity. The Groton Connectivity HUB creates a space where residents can access the tools and resources they need to work remotely, pursue education, access healthcare, and fully participate in today’s digital world. It’s an excellent example of how broadband investments strengthen communities.”

According to the grant application, “Residents of Groton have rallied to support this project through meetings, volunteers, and funding. The grant application has generated excitement at the opportunities that the Community Centers can help provide — from educational programming to a private location for court participation or telehealth visits.”

NEKCA Making Use of New Tech Hub, Grateful for Partnerships

Heather Alger, a staff member in NEKCA’s Economic Access Programs,



Vermont Community Broadband Executive Director Christine Hallquist speaks at the grand opening of the Groton Hub on June 27.

COURTESY PHOTO

said NEKCA is using the HUB in Groton to assist people in the region with myriad services and opportunities.

“For rural communities like Groton, access is about far more than technology. Limited public transportation and the rural nature of the Northeast Kingdom can make it difficult for residents to travel to larger service centers,” Alger explained over the weekend. “For families facing financial hardship, housing instability, health concerns, or other life challenges, distance can become another barrier to getting the help they need.”

She added, “That is why community-based services matter.”

Alger said NEKCA now offers a rotating schedule of

services at the Hub so community members can receive one-on-one support without leaving Groton.

“The Groton Connectivity Hub is already demonstrating how partnerships can transform a community,” Alger said. “By bringing together broadband infrastructure, digital inclusion, human services, and local organizations under one roof, Groton is creating a model that extends far beyond internet access. It is creating a place where people can learn new skills, build relationships, access essential services, solve problems, and strengthen community connections.”

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On July 11, 33 motorcycles and 58 people participated in the annual Jazzy’s Ride Poker Run, sponsored by the Red Knights Motorcycle Club, Chapter 5 of Vermont, the Jazzy’s Children Fund, and the American Legion Post 20 of Woodsville. Approximately \$1,300 was raised for the Jazzy’s Children Fund, which helps families in need when they or their children experience a crisis or need. Here, the group is seen at Three Bears Country Barn in Wells River, before taking off for the 150-mile ride.

COURTESY PHOTO BY LORIE-ANN NOYES

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It was a beautiful, sunny day for the annual Jazzy’s Ride Poker Run that took place on Saturday. The group of 33 motorcycles began their ride at Three Bears Country Barn in Wells River, rode north to Groton, through Peacham, Danville, and Hardwick; up to Jeffersonville, through Smuggler’s Notch into Stowe, south through Waterbury, Montpelier, Barre, and back through Groton, concluding at the American Legion Post 20 in Woodsville.

JO PHOTO BY EILEEN NICKLES

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