



Welcome!

Here is the February edition of the Bethel Courier Online. Each month the Courier gets more and more submissions. This month we have minutes/ reports from the BBA, Green Team, Bethel Schools and Town Hall Committee. Our newsletter is really starting to blossom into a single source for all of your Bethel Related News.

Geneva Gaiko has graciously volunteered to print and distribute hard copies of the Courier to local businesses who want them. If you would like her to drop some by, give her a call at: 234-9876.

Again, I would like to encourage more of our citizens and friends to sign up to receive the newsletter electronically. To do so, just drop me an email at: Laurelin@sover.net

As always, I'd love to get even more submissions. Tell your friends and organizations! **The submission deadline is the 25th of every month. Please consider sending something in.**

- Kirk White

Organization News:

Rotary Club Calendar

Monday, February 2nd

Monthly club assembly (business meeting) but we always have a great meal!

Monday, February 9th

Herb Campbell will talk about his life and recent work at White River Valley Ambulance.

Monday, February 16th

No meeting for President's Day.

Monday, February 23rd

Katrina Cummings will talk about the Boys & Girls Club of America.

Rotary meets every Monday night from 6 PM to 7:25 PM in the Bethel White Church. Dinner is catered by Maybelle Dumont and costs \$11.

We are always looking for good speakers and topics of local, national and international interest. If you would like to come and tell us about your organization, club, company, hobby, or whatever else is your passion, please contact president Kirk White at 234-9670.

Bethel Historical Society

The Bethel Historical Society's regular Meetings are on the first Monday of each month at 7 PM. Next meetings are:

Monday, March 2, 2009, 7 PM

Monday, April 6, 2009, 7 PM

Meetings are held at: Paradigm Consulting building, Main Street, Bethel.

Organization News:

Bethel Business Association

The BBA meets on the first Wednesday and third Thursday of every month at 6:30 PM.

Thursday, February 19th

Mixer at Black Forest Café, 245 Main Street, Bethel, VT

Monday, February 23rd 7:30 AM

Legislative Breakfast at Black Forest Café.

Wednesday, March 4th

Next Regular Meeting at Paradigm Consulting

Contact Rick Benson at 234-6440 for more information.

Bethel (January 26, 2009) — Rep. Sandy Haas and Senators Alice Nitka and Dick McCormack spent 90 minutes talking to voters at the Bethel Business Association's first legislative breakfast of the 2009 legislative session. At the 7:30 to 9 a.m. event at Bethel's Black Forest Café, the lawmakers addressed a broad array of subjects, including the state of the local economy, the state budget, a new law targeting child molesters, and school funding.

"The Bethel Business Association is grateful to our representatives in Montpelier for taking the time to talk with concerned voters," said Rick Benson, Chair of the BBA. "We're glad we can offer these legislative breakfasts each month, and that the lawmakers are able to attend and keep us in the loop on what's going on at the Statehouse."

The economic downturn and all its attendant financial implications drew the most give-and-take between the legislators and their constituents. Sen. McCormack noted that so much of the state budget is tied up with federal programs — not to mention the possibility of federal aid specifically to address the economic slump — that determining final budget figures at this point are not possible. "The economy is a big issue for us, and a lot of what we do in the legislature depends on what the federal government is going to do," said Sen. McCormack. "So at this point, there's a lot of guesswork and speculation... Federal money might come in, but it might be earmarked."

Rep. Haas said that there is no shortage of ideas about how to trim the budget to accommodate current economic realities, but she noted certain frustrations with the executive branch as well. "The Governor has suggested in some cases that we should cut programs that have not been implemented yet, saying that those would be ways to save money without reducing services," Rep. Haas said. But one such program — for a men's work prison in Windsor — was specifically created and funded by the legislature in order to reduce the growing costs of the state's prison

system, she noted, which means that cutting it would not save money in the long term.

Rep. Haas pointed out that the legislature constantly keeps an eye on the future economic health of the state, but at the end of the day, they are required to determine that year's budget. "We always look at the long term," she said, "but when push comes to shove, we have to pass a budget that gets us to the next June 30th."

Another topic addressed by the lawmakers focused on a proposed new law to address child sexual abuse. The law would set up special investigative units, require more intensive monitoring of convicted offenders, and provide information on convicted offenders more proactively. An issue, said Sen. Nitka, is that the law requires a significant amount of money to implement all its provisions. "Additional special investigative units need to be set up, and the registry needs more money to respond to the increase in requests [for information about convicted child molesters]," she said.

Senate Bill 8, which aims at reducing the number of Supervisory Unions in the state to 18, was included in a discussion about school financing. Sen. Nitka said she approves of reducing the number, but does not know the number it should be. Proponents say the measure would reduce administrative costs. But school costs as a whole were widely acknowledged as an issue to be addressed. "How to fund small schools is a major problem, and even bigger schools are having trouble," said Sen. Nitka. "For example, Springfield had a proposed 14 percent increase in their budget, mostly due to capital improvements, but now have cut programs in order to bring less of an increase to voters." Several ideas for reduction in school costs were discussed, but as with most thorny budget-related issues, comprehensive solutions were in short supply.

BBA Legislative Breakfast events are the last Monday of each month. The next one will be Feb. 23, 7:30 a.m. at the Black Forest Café, and the March 30 meeting will be attended by Governor Jim Douglas, and be held at 245 Main St., Bethel.



Organizational News:

Bethel Town Hall Committee

From the Minutes of the January 29, 2009 meeting:

[These minutes -- as well as other town committee minutes -- are available on the www.Bethelvermont.com web site under **Municipal** and then **Committee Minutes**.]

Present were committee members Amy Bergamo, Mary Floyd, Chris Masters, Sheila Jacobs and Winslow Ayer. Also present were Geneva Gaiko, Davis Dimock, Victoria Weber, Selectman Joe De Freitas, and Chris Costanzo, reporting for the *Herald of Randolph*.

Amy called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

[**To document recent events:** there were no meetings in October, November or December 2008. Instead of our October meeting, we held an "Apple Pie Information Social" meeting to share information with the public about the Town Hall Restoration Bond vote which took place on November 4, 2008. The Selectboard had held an information hearing on October 27th.

The bond vote was for 'up to \$1,300,000' but hopefully, due to monies already in hand, \$944,000. It passed by 631 to 372 votes and the selectboard is now working on getting the actual work started.]

1- The **minutes** of the September 2008 meeting were accepted by the committee members present.

2- Victoria will begin putting **Newsletter # 6** together in February. It will synopsise town hall events during 2008. The goal is to carry on the pattern of the newsletters to document events and share information, and to create an historical record.

3- Historic Preservation Grants. Amy announced that the town has been awarded a \$15,000 matching grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation for the two half moon windows and the main door in the front of the hall. This requires taking out the two fire department garage doors and replacing them with replicas of the original door and windows. The grant will be matched by the bond vote monies.

Amy is also checking into possible future grants from the Vermont Council on the Arts. If money is available we could apply for a grant to help with the stage. Amy wrote the successful front windows and door grant and is willing to write an Arts grant.

4- **Work on the Hall.** Joe De Freitas explained that architect Laz Scangas is firming up the revision of his 2002 plans. He has been working with Champlain Engineering with special emphasis on the foundations. They want to make sure that water does not get into the building. The plans call for rebuilding and sealing the exterior of the foundation walls. They are creating plans

for a worst case scenario for the foundations, so that contracts would not need to be amended depending on what is found when the foundations are exposed. The parking lot side of the building is of most concern as pipes and running water are very close to the building.

Lyssa Papazian has written a "Section 106 Review" on the historic preservation aspects of the building. This is required by Save America's Treasures which is an historic preservation grant. The review determined that the front half moon windows need to be restored in wood, but the large side windows are in bad enough condition that they can be replaced by clad windows, which should require less maintenance.

Overall the plans call for repairing foundations and brickwork, for bringing the building up to code, and for keeping historic elements. The basement will have electrical panels and a finished concrete floor, and will be partially divided. There will be an entry foyer directing traffic toward the staircase and the hall upstairs, a mechanical room, and the walls of the existing 'clogger's' room at the front left will have studding and drywall but the won't be finished off. A kitchen shall be installed in the 'green room' on the mezzanine level directly under the stage.

Review of the Plans The selectboard expects to receive the finalized plans in March and to make them available for review by citizens for about 10 days. Anyone who has an interest in what the hall restoration consists of and how it is done should take advantage of this short review period to offer their ideas and suggestions to the selectboard. In April the plans will be put out to bid. Several contractors have already contacted the town expressing interest.

5- Superintendent or 'Clerk of the Works' of the job.

The selectboard plans to hire someone to look out for our best interests and to be sure the contractor oversees and organizes work among different tradesmen efficiently.

6- Victoria reported that Dell Cloud says all the necessary **permits are 'in motion'**. These include a construction permit from Vermont Department of Labor and Industry, as well as water/ wastewater, fire marshal, electrical inspector and Historic Preservation permits.

7- Draft Policies and Procedures for running the building.

Dell Cloud and Joe De Freitas have asked the committee to create a draft management and maintenance procedure for the selectboard to respond to. Using the "Other Venues" chart that Victoria created last summer, the group will use the February meeting to make draft recommendations for things like user fees, alcohol and kitchen policies, cleaning deposits, scheduling procedures, etc.

It is understood that the selectboard will use this Draft Procedures to create their own initial Procedure for when the hall begins to be used, hopefully later this year. It is also understood that their set of Procedures will inevitably be adjusted and changed as the building is used.

Town Hall Minutes Continued.....

8- Davis asked the group for a **question about the Hall to add to the Planners Survey** that the Bethel Planning Commission is hoping to do in early 2010. The Planners' goal is to send out a questionnaire to solicit opinions from the citizens and landowners of Bethel about a number of issues. The answers will help the Planners update the Town Plan every five years, and also gives the selectboard and others an idea of the issues that are important to townspeople. The first Survey, in 2006, asked how folks would like to use the Town Hall and about 300 responses were received. Ideally a Planners Survey will be done every 5 years to continue to determine issues of importance to townspeople. Davis asked for suggestions of a question to ask the citizenry about the Town Hall as it comes back into use as a community hall.

9- **Future Town Hall Committee.** Amy announced that she is going to step down as chair of this Town Hall Financial Committee very soon. She is still willing to write grants, but that is all.

A general discussion about a future committee or board to advise the selectboard into the future ensued. Of special concern is the need to actively maintain the building and to not let it slip into 'benign neglect' again. Joe will talk with the selectboard about a future board.

10- Davis expressed a formal '**thank you**' to Amy for the work she has done to get us this far.

Joe recognized the whole group for their work, effort, time and fortitude.

The process that cumulated in the affirmative bond vote began about 16 years ago with the "Wall to the Hall" Downtown Planning effort, and Mary reminded us that she had spoken with Donna Nelson who remembered working to make the Hall a community space in the 1970's.

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.

Organization News:

Bethel Green Team Minutes

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

Bethel School Cafeteria

6:00 PM

J. Lazo introduced Ken Hafner from the RC&D to the team. Ken started by explaining who the RC&D was, (Resource Conservation and Development), and what they do. The RC&D is a unique non-profit organization, under the US Department of agricultural federal program. Ken is an USDA employee, in the natural resource conservation department, covering several state counties.

The main goal of the RC&D is to work in helping local community groups get worthwhile enterprises to come to fruition, as well as, understand the needs of the local communities and supports them to fulfill those needs. The RC&D works within any jurisdiction of the USDA. The RC&D will also support and help local chapters to achieve 501(c)3 status. When acting as a fiscal agent, the RC&D can also help with the writing of grants.

Ken provided examples of work the RC&D has helped with; Kayak Ramp at the Peavine Restaurant (done in conjunction with the Rotary), Better Back Roads program to help towns contain sediment and erosion on roads, Farm incubator program – assisting people to write a business plans and helping them to buy or rent a farm, working with towns on park development, etc.

Jose Lazo introduced the Sustainability Education Center project to the team, explaining how the RC&D had helped the corresponding Green Team committee on this enterprise. Joe Defreitas, showed interest, and suggested to Jose Lazo to get in contact with Del Cloud (selectman chair) to place this project on the agenda for their **February 9th** meeting.

Deb Leahy asked who would be the legal entity acquiring the real estate property. Ken Hafner stated that the RC&D will help the Green Team become a legal entity, to include the forming of articles of incorporation, etc.

Recycling:

Greg Timmins reported the latest on recycling initiatives, four bags per week are presently being collected. Also, the milk jugs from the high school seniors are being recycled. Greg spoke with Andy West regarding the elementary kids not using the milk cartons, and suggested that they either use the same milk jugs the seniors are using, or a milk dispenser, which would not generate waste. Andy said he'd look into the milk dispenser. Greg reported that a lot of milk is wasted with these cartons. Beth Umba asked if the milk was free. Gregg responded that if we can get help from the government for milk cartons, we should be able to get help for a non-wasteful milk dispenser system.

Green Team Minutes Continued.....

Greg reported that his wife Tina had spoken with the principal in Thetford and they had reported a savings of \$150 on their trash bill from the recycling they've started. Andy West had agreed on speaking with the cafeteria staff to start recycling the tin cans.

Cheri Bush stated that she heard that Sharon elementary had a program to separate food from paper last school year. She suggested promoting zero waste lunches at the upcoming home show.

Joe Defreitas suggested that there are problems with Casella's trash removal, as they are starting to charge for recycling, as the demand is down.

Deb Leahy reported that the latest PIE group collected \$44 in the recycling of printer cartridges. She said that there is a program in which the money collected would be more efficient, if businesses can donate print cartridges directly. Deb is to provide information to J. Lazo

BBA Home Show (March 7th)

Beth Umba proposed a "Lunchavore" for this event, an all local organic food fair in the hallway as a Green Team Fundraiser. All local businesses can setup a booth, and expose what they have, so it was suggested to setup a Green Team Booth as well. Beth stated that she has heard that there will be a few "green businesses" present (solar, wind). The Randolph radio station is scheduled to be broadcasting and providing PR. Beth needs 5 – 6 people to help on Friday night, and 6 people to help on Saturday. Deb said she will help, and Greg stated that Tina could help on Saturday. Volunteers are welcome, and should contact Beth Umba directly.

Beth Umba to check with boosters to see if they are planning to be there.

Brian Bush stated that he would like to setup water filtration bottles with our organization to promote re-use, as a way of fundraising. He explained the concept to the team. A recyclable water bottle with filter cost is \$30, and can save significant amounts of money in water and plastic. Cheri Busch proposed placing the Green team logo on the bottle, even with stickers, and use this as a fundraiser. Green team needs to register to do this.

Go Green Initiative

Jose Lazo gave an overview of the initiative status, and how Andy West has kicked this off at the latest School Board meeting. Part of the initiative is to integrate 10 lesson plans into the curricula. Ken Hafner suggested the "Envirothon" program. Schools put together teams and they work with a natural resource professional. There is a training day at the Woodstock – Rockefeller center in April. Top team for the month moves to the North American competition. A Coach is needed to put together the teams. Website is: www.VACD.org/envirothon.

Energy Audit

Bob Clark reported on the energy efficiency audit conducted last week by Norm Etkins, whose report will be made available by end of this month. Bob discussed some of the suggestions Norm made during the audit, like motion sensitive switches, turning lights off that are not needed, pre-heating with propane versus electricity. Norm Etkins works with Efficiency Vermont and promotes reduction of electric demand.

The Sticky Note Brigade concept was discussed, so as to involve the kids and the janitorial staff in conservation measures. Andy has agreed to start, so the brigades are to be implemented as soon as next week.

Safe Bus Routes

Bus stop - Federal Grant with the Nutrition committee - 200K available.

Ken offered RC&D support on this. Deb Leahy reported the need to put a team together. Team members that are a must are:

Selectboard – Joe Defreitas
Principal – Andy delegated Andra
School board member – Jose Lazo
PE teacher – TBD

Deb also expressed the need of a town map – Bob Clarke to help. Deb reported on the plan phases, for example, the 1st phase is to encourage the community, so the buses will stop near the school, and kids will walk. Also, there should be an education campaign. Bob Clarke asked if an efficiency maximization study on bus routes has ever been done? Team agreed that it would be a good idea, but difficult to accomplish, as bus routes are constantly changing, as families are constantly moving.

Next Meeting Scheduled for March 4th. Location and time TBD.

For more information, go to our website at:

<http://www.bethelschools.org/COMMUNITY/GREENTEAM/>

and/or contact Team Chair, Jose Lazo at:
Bethelgreenteam@gmail.com or 802-234-9570.

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Bethel NECAP scores continue upward trend

Bethel (February 10, 2009) — The Bethel Schools' multi-year effort to improve its New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) test scores has continued to yield dividends, with Bethel students outperforming the state average in most categories during the most recent round of testing.

"The scores we saw for our students during the Fall 2008 test were very gratifying," said Bethel Schools Principal Andy West. "Our students in grades three through eight did an absolutely stellar job, and we're very proud of them, and of the teachers who have worked so hard to teach the material effectively."

The NECAP tests students in two to three categories, depending on their grade level. In reading, 75% of Bethel students in grades 3 to 8 achieved the standard of "proficient" or "proficient with distinction," compared to 71% of students statewide. In Math, the difference was greater, with 72% of the Bethel students achieving the standard, compared to 66% statewide. Writing was the category with the largest difference: 75% of Bethel third- to eighth-graders achieved the standard, while only 54% of students statewide hit the mark.

"We have put a lot of effort into reinforcing our curriculum so that it prepares students for a broad array of academic challenges, including the NECAP tests," said West. "We have literacy programs in early grades that make a positive difference, and our math program is always being evaluated for improvements."

Bethel's NECAP progress continues its positive trend even in the face of demographic challenges. In addition to dividing NECAP scores by grade-level, the state also breaks them down into socio-economic and special education categories. Bethel has a very high proportion of special education students — over a fifth of its student body — and achieved very high scores in that category: 47% of its elementary special education students achieved the standard in reading, compared to only 22% statewide, and 33% of Bethel Elementary special education students achieved the math standard, compared to the state average of 21%.

Similarly, Bethel performed well in the state-defined category of students on "free and reduced lunch." Bethel Elementary's reading score for students in this category was 69% achieving the standard, with the statewide figure being 54%. In math, Bethel Elementary students on free and reduced lunch beat the state figure by 20 points, 68% to 48%.

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Automotive

Dean's Auto Service
Ted Green Ford, Inc.
Valley Motor Sales

Banks and Money

AM Turk Tax Associates
Grn Mtn Economic Development Corp.
Randolph National Bank
Mascoma Savings Bank
Northfield Savings Bank
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Markets, Stores and Supplies

Bethel Central Market
Locust Creek Country Store
Logan Enterprises
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Restaurants and Caterers

Black Forest Cafe and Caterers
Cockadoodle Restaurant
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Ellis Music Co.
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Felicia Dieffenbach	Geneva Gaiko
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