Volume 21, No. 5

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March-April 2024

# Windham News & Notes

# Town Meeting, Saturday, March 9, 2024 - 10 AM at the Meeting House

Town Meeting Day is our opportunity as voters to participate in town governance. It's our collective way to discuss Windham's local issues. Those in attendance hash out the issues and vote on warned articles that affect both Town and School issues, and their budgets. Articles to be voted upon have been warned and are posted at the Town Office, the Meeting House and the Fire House. The Annual Town Report was mailed to registered voters in late February and is also available at the Town Office. Please read your Town Report carefully so you can ask questions and make informed decisions. Bring it with you to Town Meeting and come prepared to share your views. You must be on the Voter Registration List to vote. The meeting will be in-person with floor voting only and will begin at 10 AM. If you have any questions, please call the Town Clerk at 802-874-4211.

We will break for a potluck lunch at noon. Please bring a potluck dish to share and \$1per person for paper goods. Imme Maurath and Windham Community Organization (WCO) will assist with the traditional Potluck.

If you would like to become more involved in serving the town of Windham, please consider running for office. Elected positions must be nominated from the floor at Town Meeting. *Windham News & Notes* has not received a statement from anyone who is considering running for an elected position so we have no statements to publish and will not be holding a Meet the Candidates event. If you plan to run for elected office, please educate yourself as to the duties and responsibilities of that office, as described in Vermont State Statutes and summarized by the Secretary of State: <u>https://www.sec.state.vt.us/</u>elections/candidates/local-office-descriptions.aspx.

Positions to be **elected** are listed below, along with the term of office and the incumbent: <u>Moderator</u>, 1 year, Incumbent - Michael McLaine <u>Selectboard</u>, 3 years, Incumbent - George Dutton <u>Lister</u>, 3 years, Incumbent - Russell Cumming <u>Auditor</u>, 3 years, Incumbent - Kathaleen Jungermann <u>Constable</u>, 2 years, Incumbent - James Lawler <u>Delinquent Tax Collector</u>, 1 year, Incumbent - Paul Wyman <u>Windham Center Cemetery Commission</u>, 5 years, Incumbent - Walter Woodruff <u>West Windham Cemetery Commission</u>, 5 years, Incumbent - Colin Blazej <u>North Windham Cemetery Commission</u>, 5 years, Incumbent - Ralph Wyman

<u>Library Trustee</u>, 5 years, Incumbent – Eileen Widger

Leland & Gray Representative, 3 years, Incumbent – Vacant (was Crystal Corriveau)

Windham School Director, 3 years, Incumbent - Daniel Roth

Windham also has appointed positions that will be filled by the Selectboard at the first Selectboard meeting after Town Meeting on March 18. If you are interested in serving in an appointed position, please contact the Selectboard.

The **appointed** positions available this year are: Road Commissioner, 1 year, incumbent - Kord Scott Planning and Zoning Commission, 4 years, three positions, incumbents - William Dunkel, Katherine Wright and **Christopher Cummings** Windham Regional Commission, 1 year, two positions, incumbents - William Dunkel and Carolyn Partridge Tree Warden, 1 year, incumbent - Walter Woodruff Building Safety Officer, 1 year, incumbent - Ronald Cohen Selectboard Clerk, 1 year, incumbent – Mary McCoy Assistant Town Clerk, 1 year, three positions (appointed by Town Clerk), incumbents - Joyce Cumming, Carrie Tintle, and Alan McLaine Assistant Town Treasurer, 1 year, (appointed by the Town Treasurer), incumbent - Gail Wyman Co-Emergency Management Coordinators, 1 year, two positions, incumbents - Imme Maurath and Kathaleen Jungermann Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service Operators, 1 year, two positions, incumbents - Tan Bronson and James McCandless Energy Coordinator, 1 year, incumbent – William Dunkel Citizens Advisory Committee, 3 years, two positions, incumbents - Bonnie Chase and Michael Simonds Green Up Day Co-Coordinators, 1 year, two positions, incumbents - Ellen McDuffie and Kathaleen Jungermann Energy Committee, 3 years, incumbent – Vance Bell Social Services Committee – 1 year, four positions, incumbents - Thomas Widger, Marcia Clinton, Carlton Raymond and Barbara Jean Quinn Meeting House Committee, 3 years, incumbent – Louise Johnson Deerfield Valley Communications Union District Representative, 1 year, two positions, incumbents -David Cherry and Christopher Cummings Grant Strategist, 1 year, incumbent - Cathy Edgerly Fales Grant Administrator, 1 year, incumbent – Imme Maurath

# We hope you will attend Town Meeting, share your views and vote!



# Selectboard Report: Positive Developments and Community Engagement

Winters Table: Windham has been buzzing with excitement as we embrace the Winter of 2024. Thanks to a generous grant from the AARP of Vermont, our community is coming together to restore our Meeting House kitchen and host three cooking and eating events. These gatherings celebrate not only delicious food but also the warmth of camaraderie. The first Winter's Table event, held in January, featured a cheese dinner with local products and experts. February's event was the Cuisine of India, featuring local chef Ravi Shimpi, a local Chef from the Willow Inn in Newfane VT. In March the Co-founder of Grafton Market, June Lupiani, will inspire us with her insights. To learn more, go to <u>https://www.winterstable.com/</u>.

**Grants and Anticipation:** We eagerly await the results of multiple grant applications. Once they come through, we'll be able to take actionable steps toward much-needed repairs and upgrades for the Meeting House. Much of the ARPA funds are reserved for the Meeting House, however we are trying to exercise patience by using the ARPA money in conjunction with grants to maximize our renovations and minimize our out-of-pocket expenses.

Website Development and Transparency: We're exploring new horizons by considering the construction of a new comprehensive town website. This digital platform will continue the important task of not only providing essential information but also fostering transparency. If we proceed, this digital platform will evolve over the next several years, eventually transitioning to a .gov domain which has strict accessibility standards. If you have any ideas or thoughts regarding the website, reach out to us, we would be glad to discuss your thoughts. Stay tuned for updates!

**Sustainable Energy:** Our town office solar panels are up and running, contributing to a greener Windham. Currently, they provide energy to the town office, with excess power flowing into the grid. Credits are allocated to four designated buildings for net metering: Town Office: 25%, Garage: 35%, Meeting House: 20%, Firehouse: 20%. Kudos to everyone involved in this project!

**Infrastructure:** We thank our dedicated road crews who have been hard at work maintaining the town's roads in this interesting weather. As winter transitions to spring, keep an eye out for even more roadwork. The South Windham culvert project has been a significant undertaking, and we appreciate everyone's patience during its execution. While it has presented challenges, rest assured that the long-term benefits will far outweigh the temporary inconveniences. This critical infrastructure improvement ensures better drainage and reduces flood risks. Cold River Bridges is committed to completing construction by 4/1/24 which is required to receive reimbursement from FHWA. Your patience is deeply appreciated.

**Enhancing Communication:** Our newly acquired OWL meeting video system has revolutionized our communication. Whether you attend in person or virtually, meetings are now smoother and more accessible. Let's continue engaging and collaborating as we shape Windham's future.

**Town Meeting:** Our annual town meeting is just around the corner, and we can't wait to see everyone there! This gathering is more than just a formality it's a celebration of direct democracy. As we come together, we'll discuss important ballot articles that shape our community's future. Town meetings are the heart of our democratic process—a chance for residents to voice opinions, ask questions, and contribute to decision-making. This year, we have many essential ballot articles that directly impact our community. Your vote matters, so mark your calendars and join us.

As we reflect upon the uniqueness of town meetings, we encourage community members to consider running for office. Windham really needs many folks working together to make our community function and be cohesive. Your voice matters and serving in office or on one of the many committees is a powerful way to make a difference and to effect positive change. Let's build a stronger, more vibrant Windham together!

Our hardworking team has meticulously crafted a budget for town meetings that balances our needs and aspirations. While there is a modest increase this year, we are preparing thoughtfully for the future. We are asking to put money aside for the paving fund as well as for a new plow truck, among other things. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility ensures that Windham remains resilient and well-prepared.

Thank you for your support and dedication. Together, we're building a stronger, more vibrant community one positive step at a time.

Respectfully, Kord, George, Michael and Mac TURN CLOCKS AHEAD 1 HOUR SUNDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>

# News from the Town Office From Ellen McDuffie, Town Clerk

How to Register to Vote if You are a Windham Resident

If you are not registered to vote in Windham, please go online at https:// sos.vermont.gov/elections/voters to register, or to obtain more voting information. There is no deadline to register in Vermont. You may register to vote up to and including the day of the election. However, if you register online the day before the election or on Election Day, your application may not be processed and your name may not appear on the voter checklist, in which case you may be asked to fill out another application at the polls. To be sure your name appears on the checklist, please register by the Friday before the election.

### <u> Presidential Primary - Tuesday, March 5, 2024</u>

In-person voting for Vermont's Primary Election on March 5<sup>th</sup> will be at the Meeting House (26 Harrington Road), with polls open from 10 AM to 7 PM. Six Republican and six Democratic candidates have qualified to be on Vermont's Presidential Primary ballot. Federal law requires that you must declare which ballot, Democratic or Republican, you wish to vote. Absentee Primary ballots will <u>not</u> be mailed out to Vermont voters, but voters can request absentee ballots through the My Voter Page at mvp.vermont.gov or by contacting the Windham Town Clerk by phone (802)874-4211, by email at windham.town@gmail.com or by stopping by the office.

Absentee voters, once you receive your ballot, follow the directions carefully and return promptly. Please use black or blue ink when marking your ballot, remove stray marks and only vote for one candidate, unless otherwise noted on the ballot. Review your ballot to be sure there will be no question about your vote by the person counting ballots. Sign and date the affidavit on the outside of the sealed envelope containing your ballot, affirming your identity and eligibility to vote. The most common reasons for rejection of a ballot are voters forgetting to sign their ballot envelope, or not enclosing their ballot in the signed and sealed envelope. If you make an error on your ballot, please call the Town Clerk right away at 802-874-4211. The U.S. Postal Service advises returning ballots by mail at least 7 to 10 days before Election Day. Voters may return their ballots to the Town Office by March 4, or drop them by the polling place at the Meeting House no later than 7 PM on Election Day, Tuesday, March 5.

# Mark Your Calendar for Another Election, March 27!

On Wednesday, March 27, an election will be held for the West River Education District. Windham is a part of this district because it includes Leland & Gray where our seventh through twelfth grade students attend. We will be voting on the budget for the 2024-2025 school year and other district articles. Early/absentee voting may be possible; if so, an email will be sent out or you may call the Town Office to inquire after March 1. The polls will be open for in-person voting from 10 AM- 7 PM at the Meeting House on Wednesday, March 27.

# State Law: All Dogs Must be Registered by April 1, 2024

All dogs and wolf hybrids six months or older must be licensed at the Town Office. Bring certification of rabies vaccination and proof of neuter/spay, if applicable. Fees are: neutered or spayed dogs, \$10. After April 1, \$12. Males, females, wolf hybrids, \$14. After April 1, \$18. If your dog is not registered, you could face a fine.



WINDHAM NEWS & NOTES A publication of the Windham Community Organization, published six times a year. Please send donations to defray publication expenses to the address on the back.

#### N&N Team

Maureen Bell Dawn Bower Pat Cherry Chris Dunkel Leila Erhardt Louise Johnson Kathy Jungermann Imme Maurath Ellen McDuffie Philip McDuffie Pat McLaine Susan Persa Barbara Jean Quinn Carolyn Rubin

Many thanks to all who contribute. Send articles of around 300 words to the address on the last page or email to: <u>windhamnews@hotmail.com</u>.

Next deadline: April 19, 2024

# **Town Office Hours**

Monday Noon - 6 PM Wednesday 10AM - 4 PM Thursday 10 AM - 4 PM

Third Saturday of the Month 11 AM - 2 PM

CLOSED Tuesday, Friday & ALL Federal Holidays For an appointment at another time, please call 802-874-4211 or email windham.town@gmail.com.

**Face Mask Optional** 

**To Join A Zoom Selectboard Meeting:** The Selectboard meeting information is available from the printed agendas that are posted at the Town Office, Meeting House, and Fire House on Saturdays before meetings, and are also posted on the town website at: <u>townofwindhamvt.org</u>.

# **Listers Corner March 2024**

Spring is just around the corner, we hope. Along with it comes that glorious time of the year for maple syrup and . . . mud season. Some of us would prefer to be on a warm sandy beach with a good book to read. Well, so much for that dream. The reality of the reappraisal is about to be felt by many of us as the next few months unfold.

As we have eluded to in several of our previous Lister Corner articles, we are in for a reappraisal shock when we get our reappraisal letters later this spring. We have written in the past that reappraisals are intended to reflect the current fair market value of our property. Just what is that value? It is the price a willing buyer will pay for your property. In Windham more than 88% of the property sales over the past 36 months have been to non-homestead (vacation home) buyers. Those are all willing buyers who purchased property in Windham using a valuation metric from the community where they currently reside. Sellers are happy to get the extra money. If you are not the seller, you are wondering why buyers would be willing to pay so much.

Remember all those sales, 88% of which were to vacation home buyers or land speculators, are the sales that establish the fair market value of your property. And that is the amount on which property taxes are based. Well there is some comfort in the wings. Your property's net asset value went up, while the municipal tax rate will go down, because as the

# **Meeting House Committee Update**

Happy to report we had a fun kickoff to "game afternoon" in February. Eight people came to play. We had a variety of games set up throughout the room and people moved from one to the other. Rummikub was the big winner – all of us joined in to learn this fun, face-paced game. In fact, at one point we had two games going at once! Thanks to Leila for teaching us. Some of us enjoyed playing Cribbage, along with the card game Phase 10. There was some discussion about doing it more often, but for now we're going to meet on the first and third Wednesdays of the month, from 12:30 - 2:45 PM. Hope to see you there!

The final chapter of The Winter's Table series of events takes place in March. See the announcement on page 10 in this issue.

We continue to host the Town Library (with book club discussions on the 1st Wednesday of the month), Living Strong exercise group twice-weekly, periodic WCO-sponsored Legislative Updates with our State Grand List values rise, it allows a lower tax rate on the Grand List to raise the same amount of money for the Town's operations. You may still pay the same amount of money, but the rate will be lower.

Unfortunately, the same is not true for the Education tax rate. As we have written in the past, the Education tax rate is determined by the amount of money the School Board spends per student. The more spent per student, the higher the tax rate. Now the legislators realized the per-student cost has been going up every year as the budgets increase and the student count continues to fall state wide—a 20 plus year trend. Enter political pixie dust in the form of Act 127 which was passed this year to lower the cost per student. In Windham it takes the approximately 15 students in grades K-6 and turns them into 33 plus students for determining the cost per student. The actual number of students is still 15 but the legislators see double. Neat trick, huh? As with many tricks it may be a game of "now you see it", and "now you don't".

Unfortunately, some of the provisions of Act 127 are regressive over time and would eventually revert back to the old system where a penalty would be imposed for spending more than a specified state average per student. The excess spending adjustment is suspended until 2029, so is the hold harmless provisions. Many elements of Act 127 are not permanent and will revert to the pre-2022 provisions. Don't be fooled by political pixie dust.

Windham Listers, Russ Cumming, Bill Casey, Ron Cohen

Senators and representative, other Town and community events, and some small, private parties.

Lots of routine maintenance and repairs go on behind the scenes in an effort to get/keep the building safe: fire extinguisher, lift, fire alarm and oil tank inspections. Meetings with the State Fire Marshal and our insurance company have also recently taken place. We currently await grant information so we can decide how to move forward with some other muchneeded care.

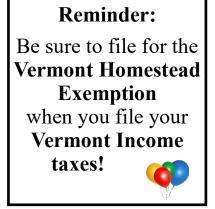
As always, your support of the precious 1802 Meeting House is appreciated.



# **Rabies Vaccination Clinics At Windham Town Office**

Ashley Pinger, the Windham Animal Control Officer, will be conducting two more Rabies Clinics at the Town Office on Thursday, March 7 and March 21 from 10 to 11 AM. If your dog is due for vaccination any time in 2024, you are eligible to participate. The fee is \$22 and the vaccine will be administered by a licensed veterinarian, Dr. Paul Kotas. Just bring your dog and his/her most recent vaccination certificate. Following vaccination, you may also register your pet at the Town Office.





# Total Solar Eclipse in Vermont April 8, 2024 By Kathy Jungermann

On April 8, for the first time in almost 100 years, Vermont will see a total solar eclipse. The moon will completely block out the sun, leaving only its coronathe outermost region of the sun's atmosphere, named for its crownlike appearance-visible for several minutes.

A partial solar eclipse will begin at 2:14 PM and at 3:26 PM a total eclipse will darken Vermont's daytime sky, lasting about 3 minutes between 3:20 PM and 3:30 PM. Towns lying directly down the center of the path of totality will experience the total eclipse for the longest duration, around three and a half minutes. Towns closer to the edges like Montpelier will see it for a shorter duration. Areas outside the path of totality will see a partial eclipse, called the 'penumbra'. The phenomenon will continue as a partial eclipse until 4:37 PM. The area impacted by the eclipse will be an east-to-west line from St. Johnsbury, Barre, and Middlebury north to the Canadian border. A map of the area can be found at: https://vem.vermont.gov/document/ecipse-areatotality.

Areas south of the path of totality-including Barre, Rutland, Bennington, Brattleboro (and Windham) will experience a partial solar eclipse. The sun's corona will not be visible, but the sky is still predicted

# Easter Services—Valley Bible Church By Susan Persa

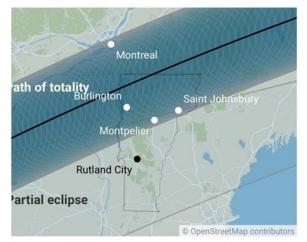
On Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024 Valley Bible Church will offer three morning services:

- 7:30 Easter Sunrise Service outside at Windham Hill Inn, followed by a potluck breakfast
- 9:00 Sunday School
- 10:00 Morning Service with special music

to become darker and the sun would look like a crescent when viewed through safety equipment according to NASA.

Do not look at the uneclipsed or partially eclipsed sun through an unfiltered camera, telescope, binoculars, or other optical device. Learn the simple methods to safely view a solar eclipse. Visit https:// eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety for detailed instructions. https://science.nasa.gov/eclipse is an excellent source of information about the eclipse and how to view it safely.

### Path of the 2024 solar eclipse through Vermont



Map: Erin Petenko • Source: NASA Scientific Visualization Studio • Created with Datawrapper



For more information, please contact Pastor Mark W. Griffin at 802-302-6047 (new number).

### Windham Elementary School: One Parent's Point of View By Kate Querella

I am one of the parents who had children at Windham Elementary School this past year. I have two beautiful children, one in 2nd grade and one in kindergarten. While they are new to the area, I am not. I grew up in Brattleboro where my parents fought for years about IEPs and test extensions in private schools. I am no stranger to the complications of Vermont education. That being said, this year brought a whole new set of challenges to me as an adult navigating the system and not only as a victim of it.

The girls were excited to start at Windham; one of our family sayings is that "you either like something, or learn something" and we were excited for a change. But I watched nervously as the summer went on and no staff had been hired as of August. I wrote a letter to the school board with my concerns that while Windham had been welcoming to my family, I did not see a school that was prepared to take on the difficulty of teaching so few students. With only weeks before the start of school, staff had not been hired, and I got increasingly concerned about whether new staff would have the skills to be brought up to speed in time to get the school year off the ground.

Our first six weeks did go by smoothly enough for my kids. But I am also only one family in this town and I recognize that was not true for everyone. The staff at Windham Elementary was very dedicated, but the school's resources seemed entirely too sparse to handle so much change and uncertainty. The math and reading curriculum was in question for me since I saw little to no work coming home, but the girls had stories about music class and nature walks and with so much change I wasn't particularly worried. Past October though, things certainly turned. I will not speak to the firing of the teacher/principal Jenna Cramer. That is a complicated story that I only have one small view of, and I wouldn't be doing anyone justice by recounting it here. That being said, I will speak to what happened afterwards.

Our household didn't hear anything about Jenna Cramer being fired initially. It was nearly two weeks before I was made aware that her absence was going to be permanent. Once the circumstances of her termination tumbled out (which I didn't find entirely clear, but understood the gist of by piecing information from a few sources) the communication broke down even further. I was having trouble understanding a path forward, and feeling rather frustrated. What would be the consequences of hiring a new teaching principal so quickly? The sense of

continuity in the classroom got very fuzzy, and my kids were leaving for school in tears as they expressed an uncertainty of how their day would look. They began to develop anxiety about Mondays, and I had no new information to tell them.

As a second substitute came in, I began seeing posts for board meetings on the door of the school. I received no emails or text updates about the times, just a paper posted on the door with a zoom link. Frequently by the time I was informed, the meeting had passed. 11am. 1pm. Even 2:30pm and possibly still happening, but as a working mother I didn't have the resources to partake in a zoom call midday. I was watching parents in cars trying to catch tail ends of meetings, and I felt woefully underrepresented as a parent in the community. How was anyone managing their new full-time job of keeping up with all the information along with anything else they had to accomplish that day. The parents always seemed the last to know what was happening, and I was getting more information from friends by text after a meeting than I was from the board or the Supervisory Union.

Once the vote to close the school happened, everything was done to make the transition to Townshend Elementary School as seamless as possible. While I was incredibly grateful for that, I wondered if this problem could have been avoided in the first place. What if more time had been taken to hire the correct staff? What if more community members had been involved? What if there had been more transparency to the parents?

I find myself disheartened. I don't understand how we can ethically open the school when I see so little evidence of improvement over this past year. I am far from the only one with questions about transparency and action. I firmly believe everyone involved wants the best for the kids, but we need to recognize that different kids need different things. There was some excellent programming at Windham Elementary, and even in our short time there were a few truly magical experiences. However, to turn a blind eye to the currently glaring issues of Windham Elementary is to devalue the smallest citizens of this town. I want the kids to thrive, all the kids. And the best way to do that, is to recognize their differences. Empowering parents to make the choice about where to send their kids to school would be a service to the children of Windham.

# **Do Not Feed the Bears!**



Bears are waking up!



Please bring bird feeders in by April 1<sup>st</sup>!

### Voters Will Decide on First Step Toward School Choice By Nancy Tips

On February 1, the School Board accepted a petition by Windham voters that directs the School Board to pay tuition for elementary school kids to attend schools outside of Windham; the Board voted to place the wording of the petition as an article before Windham voters. This means that Windham voters will be able to vote on a first step toward school choice during the annual School Board meeting, which takes place during regular Town Meeting, on Saturday, March 9.

Here is the wording of the article: "Shall the School Board of the Windham School District provide for the elementary education of students by paying tuition in accordance with law to one or more public elementary schools in one or more school districts for the 2024-2025 school year and continuing thereafter?"

It's been two and a half years since the town last voted on this question. In the 2021 referendum, a majority voted to tuition Windham kids to other schools, but was outflanked by a small margin in a reconsideration vote. The results of that vote were contested due to alleged improprieties. A suit followed, which is still being litigated.

# Save the Date – Green Up Day is Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> By Kathy Jungermann

Pick up your Green Up trash bags and get out in the community on Saturday, May 4 to clean up your neighborhood, roads and waterways. Participation is easy; bags will be available for pick up at the Town Office, or outside of the office alongside the front door. Please sign the clipboard and indicate the roads you are cleaning and how many bags you are taking. If someone has already signed up for that section of



Since the last school-choice vote, the school has experienced several problems, resulting in the temporary closure of the school, with children being bused to the Townshend Elementary School. These problems include resignation of long-serving staff; hiring and subsequent dismissal of replacement staff; evidence of the problems with the school building (for example, presence of asbestos that can't be safely removed); and a school board which has often dismissed the questions raised by Windham voters who are seeking alternatives to keeping the WES open. These dismissals are documented in school board meeting minutes (available at https:// www.windhamcentralboard.org/boards/windhamschool-board/windham-minutes) and videos (available at https://www.brattleborotv.org/windhamelementary-school-board).

Some parents, as well as many other taxpayers, question whether re-opening the Windham Elementary School is the best way to provide an excellent and cost-efficient education to Windham's elementary-school children. Parents and taxpayers have formed the Windham Committee for School Choice, which provides information to Windham voters about the issues associated with tuitioning students vs. re-opening the Windham Elementary School.

road, please choose another area. Full bags can be left by the side of the road for our Windham Road Crew to pick up on the following Monday. Large items such as tires do not need to be bagged, but must be easy for the road crew to see.

Watch for an email with more details coming your way soon and an update in the May/June issue of *News and Notes*. You can also learn more at www.greenupvermont.org.

Thank you! As a volunteer, you make a huge difference to our environment and community.

# Memorial Day Tag Sale By Imme Maurath

On Saturday, May 25th the Meeting House Committee will be holding a fundraising tag sale at the Meeting House from 9 AM to 2 PM. If you are interested in reserving a table, please contact Imme Maurath at <u>ism777oth@yahoo.com</u> or call 802-875-8755.



# **State Legislative Updates**

#### From Representative Heather Chase, Windsor-Windham District

I want to bring you up to date on some of the activities with which I have been involved in the current legislative session at the State House in Montpelier.

In the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee on which I sit, we took testimony on the Film and Creative Media Workforce Development Initiative from the Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Production Collective, and several film makers and writers from Vermont. All agreed that Vermont could benefit greatly from tapping into a data base that would offer a network of film industry information that would identify local Vermont talent, film equipment availability, locations for filming, jobs, internships, and apprenticeships when planning a film production in Vermont. As demonstrated this past summer with the filming of the movie, Beetlejuice 2, in East Corinth, attracting film makers from away and within is a growth industry that would have a positive impact on our Vermont economy.

Better Places, a community matching grant program that empowers Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places for projects throughout the state, spoke to my Committee about the fund-raising opportunities available to upgrade local buildings. Let's all have a conversation regarding possible projects in our communities.

The impact of legislative action on local property taxes is always a major concern as we review, propose and act on bills that will have an impact on educational policy and opportunity in our State. We are working to re-configure legislation from the previous session that may inadvertently cause property taxes to increase at an unintended rate. I support a strong public education system which is funded in a fair and reasonable manner. Our State budget must be adopted with a clear focus on the cost impact on our residents and tax payers.

You may contact me by email or phone: <u>hchase@leg.state.vt.us</u> or 802 875 4663.



#### From Senator Wendy Harrison, Windham District

We have completed the first six weeks of the legislative session, about a third of this intense fourmonth period. This session is packed with high profile issues that are consuming a lot of attention both in the Legislature and in the media, including housing, education funding, taxation system changes, and Act 250 reform.

When I was last at Windham, one of the topics that came up was short-term rentals. As you know, the State passed legislation a few years ago to allow towns to regulate short-term rentals and some towns have chosen to do so. In the Senate Economic Development Committee this week, we are hearing from short-term rental providers and state agencies about the amount of short-term rentals (about three percent of homes), the existing regulations and what actions we might want to consider. Committee Bill (S.311) will include a section on short-term rentals.

S.311's main focus is significant changes to Act 250 to encourage creation of housing in appropriate locations. The bill will be considered with at least three other bills proposing changes to Act 250 and river corridor jurisdiction.

We also are making progress on some of the bills that I initiated:

**S.230 - Medicare Advantage,** would remove the largest barrier to switching back to regular Medicare from Medicare Advantage. It would also address deceptive advertising. The bill is currently in the Senate Finance Committee.

**S.243 - Stormwater Utilities** has been incorporated into a Senate Government Operations Committee bill that is being finalized.

**S.263 - Healthcare Workforce + Equity** seeks to find ways to utilize the talents and professional experience of graduates of international medical schools who live in Vermont and would like to practice as doctors. This bill is in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee.

I look forward to meeting with you again later in the Spring with my colleagues.

Contact: <u>WHarrison@leg.state.vt.us</u>

# State Legislative Updates, continued

#### From Senator Nader Hashim, Windham District

The second year of this biennium has been incredibly busy. I continue to serve as vice-chair of the judiciary committee and as a member of the education committee. Inevitably, the challenges surrounding property taxes has been on my mind as one of the top priorities. I'll also provide a high-level overview of other bills I've been working on.

In Judiciary I've been focusing on fixing as many of the "back-end" issues that slow down the system. Earlier during the session we received testimony that the backlog will be resolved in 20-30 years; this is not a viable timeframe if we want to ensure folks have confidence in our judiciary branch. Part of the remedy includes a bill I introduced for the creation of an additional two judicial positions, this will help resolve our backlog more expeditiously.

I've also spent a fair amount of time working on a constitutional amendment proposal to add an Equal Rights Amendment to our Vermont Constitution. This type of amendment has implications beyond merely being symbolic; it will increase the likelihood that litigation related to civil rights violations will be resolved more promptly in Vermont courts rather than going to the federal level.

In the education committee I have focused much of my efforts on potential remedies for our impending property tax situation. Although the Education Committee does not handle tax or fiscal policy, the education policies we establish do inevitably affect our teachers, staff, and students. For example, with each bill we consider passing, I make sure to focus on the workload implications for teachers. This also must

### Culvert Replacement By Imme Maurath

On January 31st at 8:47 AM (and I say in the AM because if Richard had his way it would have been PM) a freight train successfully traveled from town garage five miles down Windham Hill Road to its resting spot just south of Chase Road. The road was closed for a couple of weeks forcing drivers to seek alternate routes, some adding miles to people's commutes.

This culvert was replaced as a result of the July 2023 rain event. It will be covered under the Federal Highway Grant, which is slightly different than FEMA. be balanced with understanding the needs for our students.

The senate Finance Committee recently received H.850, a bill from House Ways & Means which is meant to repeal the 5% cap on property taxes for a different discount system to our districts. The work is just beginning in the senate on this proposal. Additionally, I've suggested the possibility of removing second home-owners from the nonhomestead tax rate, which is often lower than the universally established homestead tax rate. My belief is that multi-million dollar homes that are only occupied part time throughout the year should pay at least an amount equal to the homestead tax rate, if not higher.

I've also advocated strongly for keeping education funds in the education fund. We recently had an intense debate over the governor's proposal to remove 3.5 million dollars from the education fund for afterschool programs. This money was meant to go directly to our school districts; however, the proposal would require our public schools to compete with non-profits and private businesses rather than forming partnerships with them. The debate is ongoing and as I'm writing this the proposal is being debated in a conference committee.

This is a small snapshot of some of the work I've been doing in the senate. As challenging as it is, I enjoy it immensely and I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue this work. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me by email at naderhashim.vt@gmail.com or nhashim@leg.state.vt.us.



# Forty Windham Diners Gather Around Winter's Table By Cathy Edgerly Fales

Windham's first Winter's Table event on January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Meeting House gave cheese lovers something to smile about. Reed Fay, cheese monger from Grafton Cheese, shared the history of cheesemaking both here and abroad. We then sampled a dozen or so different cheeses. Each table chose a favorite and then flavored baked potato stuffing for twice baked potatoes donated by Dutton Farms and cooked right on the spot. A fragrant bread loaf for each table donated by Windham's own Bread from the Earth was served with fruits and veggies for a complete Ploughman's lunch. The children in attendance acted as our Cheese Ambassadors and helped serve the tasting samples. We finished off the meal with fresh fudge from Dutton's and all 40 people who showed up left full and happy.

By the time you're reading this, the February Indian Cuisine cooking lesson and meal will have already taken place.

Our final event in this series of three funded by an award from Vermont AARP is set for last day of winter/first day of Spring March 19<sup>th</sup>. For more details and to make a reservation, go the website www.winterstable.com

# Windham Energy Committee Update

### By Bill Dunkel, Town Energy Coordinator

It's a long way until next November, but while this winter still has us in its grip (it was -8 degrees at my house this morning), let me mention that the Windham Energy Committee will be participating in another community build of Window Dressers storm window inserts next fall. For the past three years we have collaborated with energy committee leaders from Wardsboro and Londonderry to assemble hundreds of low-cost, energy efficient storm window inserts for many local households. We are scheduled to build more inserts next November 1-6 at the Meeting House. It is not too early to place an order or to just inquire about the program. Medium sized (30"X52") inserts cost a bit less than \$50 apiece and discounts are available for low-income customers. The inserts are attractive, easy to install and they work! Contact me if you are interested in having storm window inserts made for your home (bdunkel1455@gmail.com).

The new solar panels that were installed on the Town Office by Southern Vermont Solar last fall are operational and are producing power which is reducing the town's monthly electricity bills. The community solar array that Michael Simonds and Mary McCoy have been working diligently to bring to fruition on their property on Old Cheney Road is scheduled to be built sometime this spring or summer. There still are a few opportunities to save money on your electricity bill, without any upfront cost, by becoming an off-taker. Contact Michael or Mac for details, or go to WSolarLLC.com.

### Old Photos? By Susan Persa

Paul Wyman and Susan Persa and others in town are interested in preserving some of the special history of our town. We have been going through the "big box" of photos in the town safe and have found many gems! We would love to have copies of any of your treasures to add to the albums we are making. We hope to have some organization of these memories for the upcoming 225th anniversary of the Meeting House.

If you have pictures to share, please leave them at the Town Office marked for our photo history project. Thank you in advance for your help!



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### A Windham Welcome to Susan and Nicholas Chelton! By Susan Persa



Susan Preston Chelton and Nicholas Chelton moved to their new home at 11 Corn Hill Road in October 2023. This is the historic Harry Chapman home. This dynamic, congenial couple loves our town but literally has not had the chance to explore the area having spent all their free time getting settled. The large open areas of the house are decorated and painted in warm vibrant colors. Susan's art pieces done in various mediums grace the walls among tasteful arrangements of plants, art and china. Susan stated that this was the 38<sup>th</sup> move in her lifetime and hopefully would be the last!

#### Carbon Monoxide Alarms Save Lives By Marcia Clinton

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas produced when fossil fuels burn inefficiently. CO can be found in fumes produced by items like power generators, stoves, lanterns, grills, wood-burning fireplaces, gas ranges, or furnaces, and also the cars we drive every day. Known as the silent killer, due to its lack of color, taste and smell, carbon monoxide is invisible to the human senses, which is why CO alarms are so important.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are not always obvious. They are often mistaken for flu-like illnesses. Some examples are: tension-type headache, nausea, dizziness, breathlessness, and collapse or loss of consciousness.

At a minimum, experts recommend a CO alarm be installed on each level of the home — ideally on any level with fuel burning appliances and outside of sleeping areas. Additional CO alarms are recommended 5-20 feet from sources of CO such as a furnace, water heater or fireplace. The best place for an alarm is on a wall roughly five feet from the floor, where it can measure the air at a Susan grew up in Baltimore, Maryland and obtained her Bachelors in Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art. She worked as an Interior Decorator for twelve years. Later she went back to school at Johnson State to get her Masters in Education as well as certification in Special Education. She has taught every grade from kindergarten to adult throughout the State of Vermont. She presently teaches Special Education at the Chester Andover School. By the way, she also is a Riki Master and is available for classes if people are interested.

Nicholas grew up on a large poultry farm in Maine and later graduated from the New England Culinary Institute, becoming a chef. He is retired now, but keeps busy doing multiple repairs on the house and keeping the wood fires going! His oldest son, Tony, has come back from the service to join him in starting to build rustic furniture in the large barn that is attached to the house.

Together Susan and Nicholas have a blended family with six children, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren who live all over the US including Alaska. During the school break in February the couple plans to travel to Virginia to see their newest grandson. They hope that their family will be drawn back to Vermont now that they have this large house to accommodate them all. Both Susan and Nicholas love the community and look forward to meeting more neighbors at Town Meeting. We welcome you to Windham and are so happy to see your Christmas lights on the porch as we drive by.

height that people in then house are breathing it. A recent study from Consumer Reports found that the First Alert CO615 is one of the few plug-in CO detectors and it beats out its hardwired and battery-powered brethren, with strong scores on their tests for detecting high and low CO levels quickly, and a respectable rating for the accuracy of its CO level display. For battery operated alarms one beep every minute means that the alarm has low batteries and you should replace them. Three beeps means the alarm has encountered a malfunction and needs replacement. Five beeps means your alarm has reached the end of its life. Hardwired alarms have a lifespan of 7 to 10 years. Battery-powered devices may need to be replaced every 3 to 5 years.

If the alarm sounds: silence the alarm. Move everyone outside to fresh air and and call for help from an outside location. If anyone is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, call 911. If no one has symptoms, ventilate the building and contact a qualified service technician to inspect all home equipment powered by fuels such as gas, wood, or petroleum products. It is wise to have fuelburning equipment and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in.

### Email List Confusion By Ellen McDuffie

I want to clear up any confusion regarding emails you receive from me as Town Clerk and emails you receive from me as a Windham Community Organization (WCO) volunteer. For the past 10 years, as a service of the WCO, I have forwarded town meeting notices and information about events and activities that I've received to all of you who have requested to be on the WCO list serve. You requested this service by checking the appropriate box on the *Windham News and Notes* subscription renewal form that is mailed out with every May/ June *News & Notes* or by asking me personally to be on the list. I maintain this list of email recipients and do my best to protect your privacy by not sharing it with the public or other organizations.

Since I became the Town Clerk two years ago, some people have wrongly assumed that I am forwarding notices of meetings as "official town business". That is not correct. Whatever I forward in the capacity of WCO volunteer **is not** an official notification. While I try my best to forward town informational emails in a timely manner, I'm not always at a computer and cannot guarantee their timeliness.

As it currently stands, the Town of Windham does **not** have a means of warning meetings via email. If the town relies on a public website for the distribution of official information, they are obligated to post warnings on the website. We have a new webmaster who is working toward this end, but the committee chairs must send this information to the webmaster for posting.

The Town of Windham does not presently have an email list for sending out notices to all residents or property owners. There is only a list for sending out notices for Town Office Closings or changes in the clerk's hours, a list to which you must request to be added. If you would like to be on this town list and receive emails from the town clerk, please send email to: windham.town@gmail.com .

If you receive an email from <u>eflockwood@aol.com</u> it is an email from the WCO keeping you informed of town events, activities and things of interest, etc. If you receive an email from <u>windham.town@gmail.com</u> that is an official email coming from the Town Clerk.

Please contact me if you have any questions: 802-874-4211 (office) or 802-874-8183 (home).

# Windham Planning Commission Update February 2024

#### By Bill Dunkel, Planning Commission Chairman

The Planning Commission (PC) has been hard at work dealing with a variety of complex issues. First and foremost, we must amend our zoning regulations to bring them into alignment with the HOME Act, which the Vermont legislature passed last spring in order to promote more affordable housing. Among other things, the law requires that two family homes must be allowed anywhere that single family homes are permitted. This means we must make duplexes a permitted use in most of our zoning districts, rather than a conditional use. which would require special permission from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. We also will have to revise our definition of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to allow somewhat larger ADUs in Windham. There also may be some other amendments we should make to our regulations to comply with the HOME Act. Before any changes are made, public hearings will be scheduled by both the PC and the Selectboard.

The PC also has been working on some suggested changes in the town's Zoning Permit Application form. Our goal is to make both the form and the process that is used to review and approve a permit easier to understand for everyone. We also want to assure that all necessary information is provided by an applicant and that the drawing that is submitted with the application is adequate. Our recommendations have been submitted to the Selectboard and the Town Clerk for their consideration.

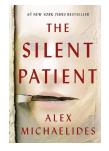
A third issue that has occupied the PC lately is the regulation of construction on steep slopes. Currently our zoning regulations prohibit all construction on slopes equal to, or greater than 20%. However, the regulations do not specify exactly where the slope of a proposed project should be measured, or who should do the measuring. We also have been discussing whether construction should be allowed on some steep slopes if a project meets strict standards that will control erosion and runoff, and will protect abutting properties and town assets. This is somewhat complicated work which will continue to occupy the PC for several more months. Again, no changes may be made to Windham's zoning regulations until public hearings have occurred.

Please note that PC meetings now occur on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM via Zoom. Meetings later this year may occur both in person and online. The public is welcomed to attend.

### Windham Library

The Windham Library is open every Wednesday from 3-5 PM. Book Club meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 3:30 PM.

### Windham Library Book Club Selection Wednesday, April 3, 2024, 3:30 PM



*The Silent Patient* is a shocking psychological thriller of a woman's act of violence against her husband and of the therapist obsessed with uncovering her motive.

Alicia Berenson's life is seemingly perfect. A famous painter married to an in-demand fashion photographer, she lives in a grand house with big windows overlooking a park in one of London's most desirable areas. One evening her husband Gabriel returns home late from a fashion shoot, and Alicia shoots him five times in the face, and then never speaks another word.

Alicia's refusal to talk, or give any kind of explanation, turns a domestic tragedy into something far grander, a mystery that captures the public imagination and casts Alicia into notoriety. The price of her art skyrockets, and she, the silent patient, is hidden away from the tabloids and spotlight at the Grove, a secure forensic unit in North London.

Theo Faber is a criminal psychotherapist who has waited a long time for the opportunity to work with Alicia. His determination to get her to talk and unravel the mystery of why she shot her husband takes him down a twisting path into his own motivations—a search for the truth that threatens to consume him....

#### Surprise Concert – April 1, 2024 By Alan McLaine

More and more Windham residents are finding a unique way to spend a Monday evening - with the Windham Philharmonic. The next concert includes Haydn's "Surprise Symphony" and Stravinsky's "The Fairy's Kiss", and will take place on Monday, April 1st at 7:00 PM at the Latchis Theatre in Brattleboro. Admission to all Windham Philharmonic concerts is by donation. Your attendance and support are deeply appreciated by your local musicians.

### Windham Library Book Club Selection Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 3:30 PM



In 1851 Father Jean Marie Latour comes to serve as the Apostolic Vicar to New Mexico. What he finds is a vast territory of red hills and tortuous arroyos, American by law but Mexican and Indian in custom and belief. In the almost forty years that follow, Latour spreads his faith in the only way he knows—gently, all the while contending with an unforgiving landscape, derelict and sometimes openly rebellious priests, and his own loneliness. Out of these events, Cather gives us an indelible vision of life unfolding in a place where time itself seems suspended.

> Windham Library Book Club Selection Wednesday, June, 5 2024 at 3:30 PM <u>Heaven and Earth Grocery Store</u> By James McBride



### Grace Cottage's Family-Friendly 5K By C. J. King

Spring is just around the corner, so mark your calendar now for the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Grace Cottage Family Health & Hospital's *Spring into Health 5K*. The event begins with an 8:30 am shotgun start on Saturday, May 11, on the Townshend Common.

You can run, walk, roll, stroll, or push your baby carriage for this fun, family-friendly event! Registration is \$20 per participant (children under the age of 18 are free with signed parent/guardian permission) and registration is open now at gracecottage.org/events. A virtual option is also available. Register at the same link.

For more information, contact Grace Cottage Foundation at <u>info@gracecottage.org</u> or call 802-365-9109. All proceeds from this event will benefit healthcare services at Grace Cottage.

# Windham Remembers

### Walter Genser

Windham has lost another friend. Walter Genser was a native of Austria, born April 11, 1945. He came to Vermont as a ski instructor at Mount Snow, where he met his wife of 53 years, Bette. Walter owned and ran The Barn in Londonderry, a name brand discounted clothing store, from 1976 until its closing some 30 years later. That success led to the opening of The Shoe Barn across the street in 1980, and eventually The Barn Annex for children's clothing and gifts. He enjoyed flying and would often take short trips to the coast. In retirement, Walter went back to ski instruction at Stratton for a few years after retirement but spent most of his time enjoying his property in Windham. He loved enhancing the natural beauty of the place. Walter fought a courageous battle for life but died just before the new year. Our condolences to his wife Bette and brother Gerald.



# **Rusty Priggen**

Michael "Rusty" Priggen passed away on January 6, 2024, at Grace Cottage in hospice care. Born March 5, 1944, Rusty was a long-time resident of Windham. He owned Power Glide Floor Sanding and Refinishing which he ran from his home on Burbee Pond Road. Rusty was a friend to all and will be greatly missed by the Windham community. He is survived by his son Benjamin of Londonderry who now runs Power Glide. Announcements for a Celebration of Life will be made later in the spring. Our condolences to his family.

# **Transfer Station 2024 Annual Permits on Sale Now**

Londonderry Transfer Station Annual Permits for 2020 are now on sale at the Town Office during office hours. One permit per family is required to use the Transfer Station for garbage and recycling. The annual permit is \$10 per year and must be paid in cash or by check made out to: Town of Windham. The Annual Permit is only available at the Londonderry or Windham Town Office with proof of residency. In addition, a punch card must also be purchased for garbage/trash disposal. These cost \$10 for 5 and \$20 for 10 punches.



# Londonderry Transfer Station and Recycling Center Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM



**Electronics Collection Event** 

Saturday, May 18, 2024 9AM-1 PM

Flood Brook School—91 Route 11, Londonderry VT

What to Bring:



\*Computers \*Monitors \*Televisions \*Copiers \*Printers

\*Microwaves \*FAX Machines \*Typewriters \*VCRs

Free to residents and charities



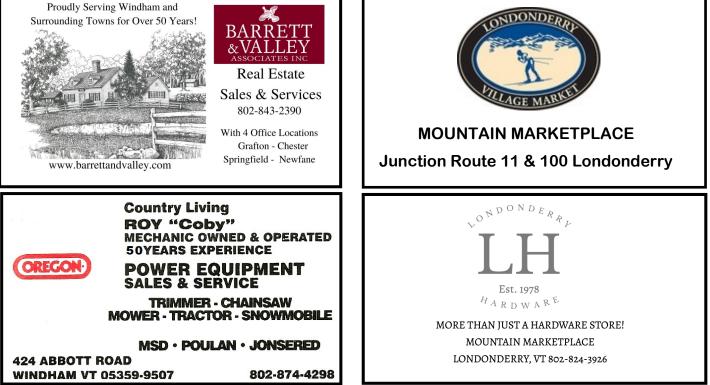
**Businesses:** 

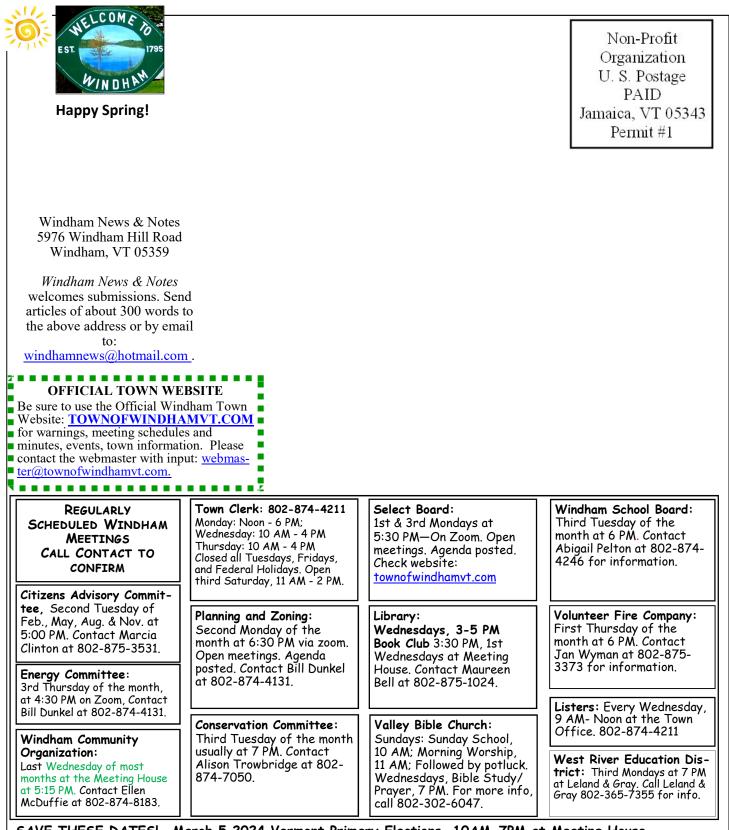
Call ahead to make arrangements

For information, call 802-824-3306 or email recycle@londonderryvt.org

TOWN WEBSITE: TOWNOFWINDHAMVT.COM

Select Board: Kord Scott, 802-875-3725; George Dutton, 802-874-4426; Michael Pelton, 802-874-4246 Town Treasurer: Kathy Scott, phone: 802-874-4211; email: windham.towntreasurer@gmail.com Town Clerk: Ellen McDuffie, phone: 802-874-4211; email: windham.town@gmail.com Town Road Foreman: Richard Paré, cell phone: 802-379-5647 or call the Town Garage, 802-874-7025 Lister and Zoning: Lister: Russ Cumming, 802-874-7011; E-911 Coordinator and Lister: Bill Casey, 802-874-7012; Lister: Ron Cohen, 802-875-1551 School Board: Abigail Pelton, chair, phone: 802-874-4246; email: apelton@windhamcentralboard.org Windham Meeting House Committee, Co-Chairs: Tom & Eileen Widger, 802-875-4604 Windham Fire Warden: Rick Weitzel, phone: 802-874-4104; Ralph Wyman, phone: 802-875-3373 Health Officer: Pat McLaine, phone: 802-875-3312; email: patmclaine@gmail.com Planning and Energy Commission: Bill Dunkel, phone: 802-874-4131; email: bdunkel1455@gmail.com (lower case L, then number 1455)





SAVE THESE DATES! March 5 2024 Vermont Primary Elections, 10AM-7PM at Meeting House March 6 2024 Game Afternoon, 12:30-2:45 PM and Book Club 3:30 PM (The Exchange) at Meeting House March 7 2024 Rabies Vaccination Clinic, 10-11AM at Town Office March 9 2024 Town Meeting, starts 10AM at Meeting House March 19 2024 Winter's Table Event, 11AM to 2 PM at Meeting House March 20 2024 Game Afternoon, 12:30-2:45 at Meeting House March 21 2024 Rabies Vaccination Clinic, 10-11AM at Town Office March 28 2004 West River Education District Election, 10AM-7PM at Meeting House April 1 2024 Deadline to register your dog, noon to 6 PM at Town Office April 3 2024 Game Afternoon, 12:30-2:45 PM and Book Club 3:30 PM (The Silent Patient) Meeting House