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Checking in



Cavan Meese checks in to vote at the Glover Town Clerk's office Tuesday. Behind him waits Saturn Roblee, Kai Roblee-Meese (left) and Pacha Roblee-Meese. Ms. Roblee waits for Mr. Meese to get done. The two youngsters have a longer wait to vote. Photo by Joseph Gresser

Glover grapples with dam issues

By Maria Amador

GLOVER — At the select board meeting here on October 24, board members and town residents discussed the condition of Shadow Lake and the road that winds around it, following written and spoken complaints. Monday, two town officials spoke with *the Chronicle* about the state of the road and the town's plans to address it.

Shadow Lake Road came up at the select board meeting when Brad Gebbie, who owns a house on the road, asked why it is not yet ready to be paved. According to meeting minutes, he asked why Class 3 and 4 roads were being prioritized over Class 2 roads.

Select board members said the road repair schedule was disrupted by two consecutive years of flooding. They agreed to meet to discuss the road maintenance schedule.

Mr. Gebbie read a letter from Bob Fortin who is ill and was unable to be present at the meeting. Mr. Fortin expressed great concern for the state of the road's ditches, the lake's level and usability, and paving.

In the first section of the letter Mr. Fortin asked who in the town of Glover authorized the (Continued on page 28.)

Coventry students practice voting

by Maria Amador

COVENTRY — Friday, waves of students from the Coventry Village School walked from their classrooms to the town office to take part in a mock election — the first since COVID-19 broke out in 2020. Students from kindergarten through (Continued on page 23.)

Council reraises rates

by Joseph Gresser

NEWPORT — The council, at its meeting Monday took action meant to correct an oversight in warning its October 28 special meeting. Although the posted agenda mentioned a discussion of water and sewer rates, it did not indicate there would be a vote on whether or not to change them.

Such a vote was taken with the effect of raising water rates for metered and unmetered users by 6 percent and sewer rates for metered users by 8 percent and 26 percent for unmetered users.

City resident Jennifer Bjurling filed a notice of violation after the meeting.

Monday's agenda stated that council members would vote to ratify their October 28 decision, which they did. The next item on the agenda was the violation complaint, which council members voted to dismiss on the grounds that they had

remedied the error by reconfirming their decision.

Interim Fire Chief Kevin Lacoste spent some time explaining unexpectedly high spending from his department. He said some department members had seen raises and members were also being paid for training time.

Mayor Linda Joy Sullivan informed Chief Lacoste that only the council is authorized to change salaries. The increases have been rolled back.

It was left unclear who made the changes to rates of pay, and council members expressed interest in finding out how the mistake was made.

For his part Chief Lacoste was firm in stating that whatever firefighters get is well earned. He said if people look at the work department members do to prepare for tackling blazes and other emergencies, they would agree the city is getting a bargain.

(Continued on page 26.)



Glover grapples with dam issues

(Continued from page 1.)

eight-foot-deep ditch near the fishing access area and a culvert he said is continuously plugged by dirt from the ditch. Mr. Fortin said he thinks the ditch is so deep that it will become a hazard for cars in the winter due to the road's soft edge.

He also said the ditch has become an eye-sore. Mr. Fortin said he thinks the treacherous state of the ditch has lowered his property's value and said he hopes his property taxes will decrease accordingly.

Road Foreman Mike Pray, the town's road foreman, explained how this situation came to be. He said the addition and repair of culverts along the road has been an ongoing project since 2020. Each year since then, the town carried out a section of the work, given the large number of culverts. Mr. Pray said the town has relied primarily on grant money to pay for the work.

When working on the portion of road in front of Mr. Fortin's house, Mr. Pray said the road crew took out two preexisting culverts, one of which ran under a driveway. As they were digging to make space for a new culvert to cross the road, workers found an eight-to-ten inch pipe connected to a nearby lawn.

Mr. Pray said, this meant ensuring the culvert that crosses the road was buried as deep as the pipe from the lawn in order to catch the water running out of it. That meant digging a deeper ditch than what was there before, he said.

Mr. Pray said he did not find the pipe's origin point, so he is not certain it is coming from Mr. Fortin's property.

As for how the ditch situation might be resolved, Mr. Pray said he thinks Mr. Gebbie and

select board Chair Phil Young have been in contact regarding the addition of a concrete catch basin that will make the ditch shallower.

Mr. Pray thinks Mr. Young was or will soon be in contact with Mr. Fortin directly, given they have only communicated through Mr. Gebbie thus far. Mr. Young did not respond to communications from *the Chronicle* regarding Shadow Lake Road.

The second issue raised in Mr. Fortin's letter is about the dam at the eastern end of Shadow Lake, which has not been publicly accessible since a sinkhole developed on its banks following flooding in July 2023. The sinkhole grew significantly after the 2024 flood, which resulted in the lake's water level being lowered to relieve the pressure on the sinkhole.

While Mr. Fortin did not mention the dam or the sinkhole in his letter, he asked when the lake would be fixed.

Glover Town Administrator Theresa Perron spoke at length with *the Chronicle* about how the sinkhole has affected use of the lake, as well as the town's plans for arriving at a solution.

Ms. Perron believed the sinkhole, when it first appeared in 2023, was comparable in size to a snake hole. In July 2024, however, a site visit conducted by Steven Hanna and Andrew Sampsell — dam safety engineers for the state's Dam Safety Program (DSP) — found the hole had grown to be approximately five feet in diameter and five feet deep.

At the time, Ms. Perron also noticed active water flow within the sinkhole, which led DSP engineers to deem it "likely that the sinkhole extends into the dam embankment beyond what is

visible." By the end of their visit last July, the DSP changed their evaluation of the dam's condition from "poor" to unsatisfactory," and requested that the town take several actions.

Most urgently, the town was required to temporarily lower the lake's water level by two feet until the sinkhole and "other seepage pathways have been thoroughly investigated and repaired in accordance with an engineered and approved solution."

That drawdown took place over the course of two months, with a foot of water being removed each month through the insertion and removal of stoplogs. According to Ms. Perron, the gradual lowering of the water level was designed not only to prevent further damage to the sinkhole, but also to allow residents enough time to remove their boats from the lake.

The town was asked to retain an engineer experienced in evaluating and designing dams, who could assess the sinkhole, seepage, and the dam's stability. That engineer should also be able to identify potential repair alternatives for review by the DSP, and work with the town on developing "a plan to improve the dam's condition and bring it into compliance with current dam safety standards."


Engineers from Dubois and King, Inc. (D&K) visited the dam and suggested a temporary "repair option consisting of placing non-woven geotextile into the bottom of the sinkhole and approximately one foot up the sidewalls of the sinkhole," before filling the hole with crushed stone. According to the firm's report, Glover town crew members made the repair as such while D&K personnel were there.

D&K's report said a Dam Safety Order is needed for the town to make a more permanent repair, which calls for further "comprehensive geotechnical investigation and analysis."

That assessment was conducted in September by Benjamin Green, a dam safety engineer for the DSP. Mr. Green gave the town a list of project updates and action items.

(Continued on page 29.)

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Dam repairs need engineering and money

(Continued from page 28.)

Since the initial site visit by the DSP, the town has developed an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), which is available on its website. It has also named three dam maintenance personnel who monitor the dam on a weekly basis, with an eye toward unusual or unsafe conditions.

The report, dated September 17, also notes a discussion between the town and Mr. Green about a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for \$85,000. That money would be put toward future engineering efforts like a structural analysis of the dam, as required by the DSP.

FEMA has since turned Glover down, based on the Shadow Lake dam's hazard level compares to that of other dams in the state. Glover's dam ranks at a "significant" hazard level — meaning properties downstream in Glover or Barton would be damaged should there be a break — people near "high" hazard dams like the Waterbury Reservoir, Wrightsville, and East Barre dams have a greater risk of death.

Despite a lack of FEMA money, Ms. Perron said the town has arranged for the next phase of evaluation to take place later this month with assistance from another engineering firm, Weston and Sampson. That assessment will focus specifically on the subsurface conditions of the dam's embankment and foundation.

According to Ms. Perron, Weston and Sampson will conduct a soil boring program, which entails drilling into the ground to collect soil and bedrock samples. Those will guide the town in addressing issues with the embankment to ensure a high quality repair of the dam. Ms. Perron expects results from this study in late December.

Once a permanent solution is found, the town will move to get the necessary permits. This will not be a quick process, however.

For the sake of transparency, Ms. Perron said, "It'll take a year to get permits, then the work starts. We're looking at 2026 before work even begins."

Until then, and in the absence of federal money, the town is making an effort to raise money and build support in the community for the dam project. In a document titled "Questions and Concerns with Answers," on Glover's website, Ms. Perron writes, "We definitely want community help in many ways."

She said Mr. Green recommended beginning community outreach and fundraising, while the town is still waiting for engineering help.

Ms. Perron said she has asked for help in raising cash for dam repair both on the town's website and in person.

At the end of his letter, Mr. Fortin touched on an issue that has been a thorn in the side of Shadow Lake Road residents and the select board — a schedule for repaving the road.

Mr. Pray explained that the town only receives money for paving from the state every three years. Glover last received a paving grant in 2022, which was a year ahead schedule, though Mr. Pray did not know why. That being the case, he said, the next time the town can expect a grant is 2026, with a possibility that it might again come sooner, in 2025.

Mr. Pray disputed Mr. Fortin's concerns about the danger of the unpaved road, with its adjacent ditches and soft edges. He said having a dirt road surrounding the lake has been "way better" than the previously paved alternative.

"Our biggest complaint with that road is the speed of drivers," he said. Three or four years ago, the town put up a flashing speed sign to deter racing drivers, but that summer the complaints continued. When Mr. Pray studied the data gathered by the electronic speed sign, he found that cars' average speed was around 32 miles per hour — three miles an hour below the speed limit.

People complain about people going too fast,

yet they think they're going to go slower on a paved road? Mr. Pray asked rhetorically.

Returning to the subject of ditches and culverts near Mr. Fortin's property, Mr. Pray explaining that those are essentially required to contain water runoff if residents want the road to not only be paved, but high-quality and long-lasting.

When asked how the state of the Shadow Lake dam and road might affect residents' property taxes, Ms. Perron thought carefully before responding.

"The lake is a separate entity to people's tax bills," he said. "Their taxes are going to be the same as they always were. It's an assessment of their property that they own," she said.

She said she understands that the condition of the lake feels important to residents, she said, but the town cannot simply dismiss the requirement to pay property taxes because of it.

She paused for a moment, then concluded her thought: "I don't know what to say about taxes because, you know, I live on a dirt road.... We're not ignoring the fact that we need to pave, and the plan is to pave."

For now, though, the plan remains on standby.

Swimmers take cold plunge for good cause in Newport

Kingdom Games hosted its Vampire Swim on October 26, at one of the places it all started: the Newport City Boat Ramp. Led by Pam Ladds of the Sharkbait Sheilas — Kingdom Games' cold water swimming group — four "bloodthirsty souls" entered the 50-degree waters of Lake Memphremagog and swam to the *Newport Princess* and back. In addition to Ms. Ladds were Lauren Holder of Newport, Katrina Yablonski of Irasburg, and Ben Bryan of Brunswick, Maine.

Altogether, the swim raised \$150 for the Vermont Chapter of the American Red Cross and

four pints of blood. The swim was coordinated by Kingdom Games in collaboration with the Vermont Chapter of the American Red Cross, Jasper's Tavern (for the afterparty and costume contest), Newport Downtown Development, the city of Newport, and the Sharkbait Sheilas.

Vampire Swim was started in 2015 by Kingdom Games and Jaimie Monahan of New York City, New York. The concept was simple: a costume party, a swim in cold water, and a blood donation by each participant. — from Kingdom Games

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