



FAIRLEE NEWSLETTER

December 2020



HOLIDAY COVID-19 SURGE

A malicious holiday surge in Vermont has made Covid cases in our region worse than ever. **Please, for your own health and the sake of your family and neighbors**, wear a mask at all times, keep a 6-foot distance from others, wash your hands, and use sanitizer frequently. Since more than 70% of outbreak related cases have been associated with private parties, social gatherings, and sporting events, please avoid gathering with folks from outside of your household. Also, consider a free Covid test at the Fairlee Emergency Services Building (aka the Fire Station) on Lake Morey Road. **To register for a test**, go to <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/testing/where-get-tested#other-testing>



HEROES OF DEMOCRACY

Fairlee had **83% voter turnout** on Election Day. In a recent statement, Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos honored Town Clerks and poll workers, writing, "As Vermonters we should be proud. The November general election saw Vermonters voting in record numbers during circumstances that are anything but ordinary...I am grateful for the diligence and dutifulness of Vermont's Town and City Clerks...our **local heroes of democracy**." Thank you to Fairlee's local heroine, Georgette Wolf-Ludwig.

2021 FAIRLEE BUDGET

Together, the Selectboard and department leaders are building Fairlee's 2021 operating and capital budgets. Fairlee's Budget Committee (Steve Bentley, Dan Ludwig, and Elizabeth Wilson) advised the Selectboard about the preliminary budget on December 7th. While considering new and different needs of the community, the Selectboard's objective is to keep growth to a minimum.

The best way for Town residents to influence the budget is prior to its printing in the Town Report. Please communicate with the Selectboard about the budget **before and during the public hearing on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.**



"WICKED FAST" INTERNET SERVICE

Fairlee is a new member of the ECDVT--East Central Vermont Telecommunications District. The Selectboard recently appointed Denis Lambert as the Town's delegate to its governing committee. The district, with a mission to provide "wicked fast" internet service to homes and

businesses through ECFiber, will offer internet speeds starting at 25Mbps and going up to 800Mbps, with all service levels symmetrical (meaning that you can upload just as fast as you can download). **ECFiber service will be available at any address in Fairlee.** ECFiber is currently working on the design of Fairlee's network. It plans to begin construction in 2021 and start connecting customers by January 2022.

TURKEY TIME

While the Ludwig family continued their annual Thanksgiving dinner delivery (serving approximately 60 households), HELP@FairleeVT volunteers handed out 51 additional fresh Thanksgiving dinners, supplied by Sacred Heart Church in Lebanon. Each week, HELP@FairleeVT volunteers, in partnership with Willing Hands, provide more than 35 households with fresh produce and dairy products. There are no residence or income requirements for the weekly program. Anyone experiencing food insecurity is welcome to participate.

TRANSFER STATION

Fairlee's contracted haulers, Quinttown Container, added a smaller cardboard container to address complaints about "the container being too tall for me to reach." Many thanks to those using the Transfer Station who are parking in the newly painted spaces, wearing face masks, and finishing off their recycling quickly (instead of staying to have lengthy conversations with their neighbors). (Maybe we'll be able to do so again in the summer?)



TOWN FOREST TRAILS

With the summer and fall logging project in the Town Forest completed, Road Foreman Mike Wright has completed all post-logging maintenance on the Howdy Trail. **The Town Forest is one of Fairlee's most enviable assets.** Forest Board Chair Dan Ludwig, volunteer Lynne Fitzhugh, and Town Administrator Tad Nunez have applied for a Vermont Trails grant that would address additional Town Forest recreational needs. **Do you want to know more about Town Forest trails?** Trail maps are available on the Town website and can be purchased at Chapman's for \$2.

TOWN MEETING 2021

For safety reasons, Town Clerk Georgette Wolf-Ludwig indicated that 2021 may be the first time that Fairlee residents will need to vote by **Australian ballot** for Town Meeting. Stay tuned for more information as we continue to gather recommendations from the Secretary of State and the Vermont Department of Health.

Comments or questions?

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Tad Nunez: townadministrator@fairleevt.org



FAIRLEE TOP RATED

Vermont's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) matches FEMA public assistance funding. Eligible public repair costs are generally reimbursed by FEMA at 75% with ERAF matching at 7.5%. However, ERAF increases its match if communities take certain steps to reduce flood risk, including having a **current FEMA-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan**. Thanks to the timely work of Peter Berger, Lance Colby, Ross Cannon, Jason Bachus, and Ken Champagne, **Fairlee has been awarded a 17.5% ERAF match for FEMA public assistance.**

WATER SYSTEM UPDATE

Paving has been completed at the pump station and repairs to the filtration system have been reviewed by the filtration company. Continued staff training on how to use the new data receiving system (i.e., the automated process of measuring household water use) has been postponed by Vermont's heightened Covid restrictions. If you are a water customer with an installed meter, this is just a reminder that **billing based upon meter readings will not begin until next year**. Water Commissioners, Water Operators Lance Colby and Barry Larson, and Treasurer Lisa Hinsley would like to have a year's worth of data and time to "shake out the system," so that usage and administrative fees can be equitably established.

FOR CONSERVATION-MINDED RESIDENTS

As follow-up to the information about the Transfer Station, Quinttown delivers paper, cardboard, and plastic to Casella (though sometimes plastic is delivered to Plymouth Recycle). Tin and aluminum are delivered to Conky Salvage and Recycling in Dorchester, NH and Gilpatric Metal Recycling in Bristol, NH. A second important FYI for conservation-minded residents has to do with energy use: In partnership with Sharon, Thetford, and Woodstock, Fairlee is in the early stages of contracting with a professional consultant who will **uncover and recommend ways to improve the performance of the Town's energy-consuming facilities.**

HOUSING IN FAIRLEE

Over the past five years, the Selectboard has explored ways to develop additional housing in the Village center. Because funding for housing is affected by number of units, the Selectboard is leading a newly formed Tri-Town Housing Taskforce to develop affordable housing opportunities in Fairlee, Thetford, and West Fairlee. Twin Pines Housing Trust and Green Mountain

Economic Development would like to see Fairlee address the issue of a **shared septic system** to facilitate housing. The Town is in discussion with the State and USDA over how to do so. **Either on our own or through the Tri-Town Housing Taskforce, working to provide affordable living space will continue to be a key focus.**



PUBLIC ART: Retaining Wall Mural in Bethel, VT

PUBLIC ART

Fairlee Community Arts is leading a Town-endorsed effort to win an **Animating Infrastructure Grant** that would fund the design and installation of public art. According to the Vermont Arts Council, the purpose of the program is to create site-specific art that will "enhance a sense of community pride and identity, foster social connections, and improve the livability and vibrancy of Vermont communities." While many communities use such grants for murals on buildings, sculpture on railroad bridges, or 3-D art on retaining walls, FCA's focus will be on art that will beautify the I-91 underpass.

OCTOBER FESTIVITIES



Back in October, did you see the **Halloween display on the Fairlee Common**? Many thanks to the Fairlee Recreation Council. Hope that Fairlee's jack o' lanterns become a new tradition.

MAILCHIMP COMES TO FAIRLEE

This edition of the Fairlee Newsletter is the second being delivered through email to all Fairlee residents for whom the Town has email addresses. In order to save money, the Town is mailing paper copies of the newsletter only to those for whom we do not have email addresses. If you are uncertain as to whether the Town has your most up-to-date email address, go to Update My Contact Information on the Fairlee website.