



Photo: Jeff Knight

'Tis the season of mud. Cross Road in Waitsfield is typical of many local roads right now. This year's mud season is expected to be bad. Be careful and remember to always go single file through the mud! (See story on Page 13.)

Local road crews ready for a muddy spring

The transition from winter to spring in The Valley makes driving down a road like dodging darts in a video game, as cars must be constantly on the lookout for potholes and frost heaves.

Extreme cold temperatures followed by a few periods of warmer weather have caused damage to the roads that's "more significant than in the past five years," Warren road foreman Rae Weston said, although "we haven't seen the full impact of what the win-

ter's done yet."

"I'll be curious to see how the road lays back down once all the frost comes out," Waitsfield road foreman Rodney Jones said, referring to the melting of heaves that have formed on paved roads due to water freezing and expanding under their surface. Jones' crew has already been filling potholes for the past few weeks, as they've thawed out.

And while drivers have been dealing with tough driving conditions on paved roads this March, getting down dirt roads will be much harder in the coming month, as the ground softens with warmer temperatures.

"We're praying for the frost to come out of the ground slowly," Jones said, but "we could be looking at the worst mud season we've seen in a while," Jones said.

Weston expects mud season this year will at least be worse than last year, "but we're already into April, so maybe it will be short-lived," he said.

As far as maintaining dirt roads

as they become rutted, "there's not a lot we can do," Weston said. Crews usually head out on nights when it's expected to get below 32 degrees and grade the roads before they freeze, "but it's only good for the next day, and then we do it all over again," Weston said.

"There's only so much you can do with mud," Jones echoed.

Really the only way to minimize damage to dirt roads over the next few weeks will be to avoid them. "If you can travel less, that's a good thing," Weston said.

For those who live on dirt roads, "use your own discretion," Jones said. The town will likely be posting roads closed to all but local traffic soon, "but just because a road doesn't say closed doesn't mean you should pound your car through it," he said.

As The Valley slogs through mud season, Jones urges drivers to "be patient." The road crews are working as hard as they can, but "it's spring in Vermont," he said.

Waitsfield

Select board advances solar array vote

By Lisa Loomis

Waitsfield is moving forward with plans to bond for a solar panel array at its town garage next month, although the select board balked at citizen requests to bond for underground power on Bridge Street at the same time.

The select board held a March 27 special meeting to work on approving the wording for a bond vote warning for a solar array that would supply most of the electricity needed for the new town offices, the fire station, the Wait House, the school, the town garage, the library and the street lights on Bridge Street.

The town is working with Nils Behn of Aegis Renewable Energy, Waitsfield, on a project that will cost \$355,000, less any grants received. It would feature 400 solar panels and would produce 119,000kWh per year. Waitsfield (and Warren) are applying for grants from the state of Vermont's Clean Energy Development Fund. The maximum allowable grant amount is \$125,000. Grant applications are due May 9.

And while the board approved the documents necessary to move forward with a May 6 bond vote and a May 5 informational meeting at the school at 7 p.m.,

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Photo: John Atkinson

A rite of spring (along with mud season) is pond skimming. Sugarbush hosted the annual event on March 29 and also had a torchlight parade and fireworks at Mount Ellen.

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Timbers introduces Bruce Hyde Jr. as manager

Timbers Restaurant at Sugarbush Resort has hired Bruce Hyde Jr. as manager.

Hyde, raised in the Mad River Valley, brings a depth of restaurant management experience to his new position. Hyde's earliest restaurant experience was earned working for his parents at the Hyde Away Inn & Restaurant while attending Harwood Union High School. Hyde went on to gain experience at several other local establishments.

Hyde continued to build on his management experience as a student at the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. While at Cornell, Hyde pursued another passion—running—and finished fourth

at U.S. Nationals for the 1500 meter – just barely missing a spot on the 2004 World Championship team.

After college, Hyde spent several years working as a professional musician, a poker player and pursuing his love of food around the country.

Hyde returned to The Valley last year to take over management of the Hyde Away. Working closely with the chef, he helped develop a new menu that has earned several awards, including *Seven Days' Best Things to Happen in Vermont Food 2013*.

Hyde plans to continue to improve and expand upon the local food movement at Sug-

arbus. "I believe if we want to keep this area the way we all like it, we need to focus on farm-to-table, focus on supporting the working landscape and putting out the best quality food we can," states Hyde.

And on non-working days in the winter, Hyde may be seen enjoying the perks of his job. Along with High Fives founder Roy Tuscany, Hyde was a member of the first freeride team at Sugarbush, which later evolved into the Diamond Dogs program.

For more information, visit sugarbush.com or contact John Bleh at (802) 583-6814 or jbleh@sugarbush.com.

Solar

Continued from Page 1

the meeting became another referendum on the issue of underground power on Bridge Street.

At the meeting, the select board faced a roomful of people who wanted to revisit an issue that was hotly debated at Town Meeting on March 4 – the issue of putting the power on Bridge Street underground when the town undertakes road, drainage and covered bridge repair work on Bridge Street this summer.

At Town Meeting in 2013, voters, after much passionate discussion, approved spending \$50,000 to install underground power conduits on Bridge Street when the road and bridge work was done. The plan was to install the conduit when the street was torn up and at a later date have the wires pulled through to get the power underground. The select board decided not to pursue that when Green Mountain Power balked at having empty conduits and costs of the project escalated.

At Town Meeting this year the issue came back and was subject to more intense discussion, two paper ballots and two proposed amendments to Article 8 which called for allocating \$75,000 for repairs to the covered bridge.

Those amendments did not pass and the select board, during the public forum portion of its meeting last week, was asked by a group of people to bring the issue to the entire town for a vote. At Town Meeting, proponents asked first to have \$400,000 added to Article 8 and then \$350,000 added to Article 8. At last week's meeting proponents re-raised the proposal from 2013 to simply ask voters to approve just enough money for undergrounding the power (\$56,000) as well as asking voters to approve enough to complete the project.

Former select board member Bill Parker along with Bridge Street resident and property owner Sam Gulisano were among those who asked the select board to bring the issue before voters along with

the solar array bond vote.

Gulisano stressed the historical importance of the covered bridge and Bridge Street to the town, noting that returning the street to the way it looked before power was important. Select board chair Paul Hartshorn asked him if he'd prefer to see the street returned to dirt as well.

Bev Kehoe urged the board to bring the issue to the voters noting that it was a good solution and cost effective.

"You think \$400,000 is cost effective?" asked select board member Scott Kingsbury.

Members of the public challenged the notion that the conduit could not be put in ahead of time and asked the select board to "stand up to Green Mountain Power."

"It is my understanding that Green Mountain Power did not refuse but that it was not their preferred option," said select board member Sal Spinoza.

"That's right," Hartshorn said.

"The question is really are you willing to ask the public for their opinion, thoughts or vote, or is this decision made here?" Bill Parker asked.

"Can I ask the select board to consider bringing this back to the voters, at least to the point of putting the conduit in?" Parker asked.

"We just had the engineers take it out of the Bridge Street and covered bridge project. If we bring this for a bond vote, we have to put off the Bridge Street project for a year," Hartshorn said.

The select board voted only to bring forward the solar array bond vote, although Spinoza said he would have supported bringing both items to the voters.

Select board members, after the meeting, suggested that the cleanest way to get the underground power issue to voters would be to petition the select board to bring the article for a bond vote. If that

happened, the board would postpone the work on Bridge Street until after that vote.

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