

# Machias Valley News Observer



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Since 1852 • Vol. 164 • No. 29

Machias, Maine • March 1, 2017

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## Machias Bulldogs and Shead Tigerettes make states



Senior forward James Mersereau claims the net for the Machias Bulldogs as the Northern Class D Regional Champions.



The excitement is captured in this photo, as the Shead Tigerettes win the 2017 Northern Class D Regional Champions. Coaches Dean Preston and Dana Bowen congratulate the Tigerettes as they make their way off the court. Photos by John Rogers

Check out the sports section for full coverage.

## Machias approves budgets, tables sewer rate hike 'Unsatisfactory leadership' has contractor helping East Machias

by Cat Cannon

The Machias budget committee met last week on February 22, this time to discuss the 2017-2018 sewer department, public works, transfer station and administration budgets.

Mandy Olver of Olver Associates, the company contracted by the town to manage its wastewater treatment plant, appeared at the meeting to present the budget request for the plant for the coming year. The budget as initially proposed totaled \$504,487, an

8.06% decrease over the current year's budget of \$548,725, and the budget committee accepted this as presented.

The approximate 2016 revenue from the sewer company came to \$416,250; Olver recommended that the town increase its sewer rates to account for the \$89,000 gap between income and expenditures at the plant. While raising rates is "of course unpopular" for towns, Olver said that charging higher rates will actually allow the town to receive a better matching ratio when receiving grants for

improvements at the plant.

As the current debt rate on unpaid accounts is on par with other plants and generates around \$44,696 per year, Olver did not recommend increasing this rate, but proposed an average sewer treatment rate increase of \$37.37 per quarter or \$149.48 per year for the 604 users in the Machias sewer system. The committee and board of selectmen made no decisions on rate increases at the meeting.

Olver personally addressed her company's involvement with the East Machias water

treatment plant. She told the town that Olver Associates had been asked by the Department of Environmental Protection to help East Machias due to "unsatisfactory leadership" in the town's plant. Olver Associates signed up for a one-year contract to assist the plant, but its staff will continue to work "foremost and primarily" at the Machias plant. Olver said that the firm will pay its staff overtime for the additional work in East Machias, and will credit Machias for any missed work if the other plant becomes a bigger responsibility.

"We certainly didn't take this on to make money... we don't make money doing these operations accounts," she said.

A total budget of \$359,159 was proposed for the Machias Bay Transfer Station, an overall decrease of 2.42% from the current year's budget of \$368,061, and was accepted by the committee as presented. The budget decreased or remained the same in all lines but insurance and work uniforms.

(Machias budget pg. 2)

## Theatre project volunteers tackle 2017 goals

by Ruth Leubecker

Restoring the Milbridge Theatre has become a labor of love, attracting an increasing number of volunteers engaged in a variety of community projects all aimed toward the same common goal.

"As of this past week \$76,000 has been raised toward bringing back the Milbridge Theatre," says Danielle Woerner, vice chair of Gateway: Milbridge. "This means we now have all the funds to pay off the building and land, which will be concluded soon. And we're making plans for phase three, which we expect

will run through August.

"That phase involves removing the existing building, preserving historic items and stabilizing the site by creating a park-like green space that can potentially be used and enjoyed by the community for outdoor entertainment."

Back in September 2015, Crystal Hitchings, a regional planner who chaired the committee to bring back the movie house, said, "Our first goal is to raise the \$50,000 by May to purchase the theatre. Then we'll need to raise another \$300,000 for demolition, reconstruction and the outfitting of the theatre.

By spring 2018 we hope to have a movie to show."

Its phases and goals, ambitious from the beginning, have spawned an impressive corps of volunteers. Gateway: Milbridge is a downtown revitalization initiative that embraced the theatre as its cornerstone undertaking. The theatre, a vital hub within the Milbridge community for over 80 years, was built in the 1930s. For three-plus decades it had been owned and operated by Dave Parsons who died in December 2014.

Empty since then, the community rallied to work for its

return. Parsons' brother Richard gave Gateway first refusal to buy the aging structure. A string of fundraisers, a clean-up and a planting followed, with about 42 people donating anywhere from \$5 to \$300. As interest grew, so did the ideas and manpower.

Last year Gateway bought the property and began plans for razing the deteriorating building. Those plans included rebuilding and reopening as a full-service movie house and community space for live performances and art exhibits. Volunteers installed

(Theatre project goals pg. 5)

## Index

Arts & Entertainment	16
Calendar of Events	. 8
Church Services	. . . .18
Classifieds	. . . . . 23
Coastal News	. . . . .11
Community	. . . . .10
Games	.....9
Guest Voice	.....6
Help Wanted	. . . . 22-23
Legals/Notices	. . . 21
Obituaries	. . . . . 19
Sports	.....12-15, 24



## Thirsty Moose lively hub of activity

by Michael R. Brown

Pool tables, five large television screens, a grand array of beer and alcohol, décor that includes a variety of animals, and a four-page menu of seafood, steaks and a moose burger. (No moose meat. Just a big burger and loads of fixings.)

In the unpopulated daytime the place echoes like a train station after midnight. Ron and Sylvia Pouliot, the owners of The Thirsty Moose and Main Street Discount, stay discreetly out of sight. On a cold winter afternoon, bartender Ashley Emery, a fount of information, tends the premises and answers all questions.

“Do you have Wild Turkey 101?” In less than a minute’s checking, the answer is a firm yes. “And what about beers?”

“We’ve got Allagash White and Pine State,” Ashley explains. They don’t get too arcane since the way-off brands don’t sell much, but you can count on pints of Bud for two dollars at any time, and all of it in chilled glasses standard.

With nobody in the place, the menu appears extensive. Ashley explains that on regular days, when there has not been a snowstorm, they get a good lunch crowd from 1-2 pm, and then the after-work crowd starts coming in at 3:30.

Food specials are listed on a whiteboard at the bar. Regular specials always include dragon steak (heavily spiced) and rib eye. Two cooks trade days with Josh coming in on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and Rick on the other days. It’s that way with the leagues

which occupy the pool tables on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Televisions respond to whatever the customers want, although major sports events, like the recent Super Bowl on the 72-inch screen, attract a big crowd, which of course went crazy as the Patriots’ comeback built through the fourth quarter and overtime. Ashley expects it will be like that with basketball for the state high school tournaments and the NCAA championship. That’s good for business, although she would like to see the inter-school rivalry tone down and people just enjoy the games.

Does all this traffic, assisted by alcohol create problems? Ashley indicated something you can hear from many proprietors and bar staff. “As long as we don’t have the drug people in, we’re okay.”

The busy decorations with all those animals is also a temptation when the place is crowded. “Ron, the owner, collects that stuff all over the place, but there’s so much stealing going on,” Ashley says. There was also a break-in after hours a month ago when somebody broke a front window, but the alarm went off and the intended thief was gone by the time the police arrived. For things like that, insurance covers the broken glass.

If you seek a quiet early afternoon in downtown Machias, try The Thirsty Moose. If you are in town for a lonely evening, catch the crowd. And if someone asks you, as Bruce Springsteen once did in my favorite Chicago bar, “Anyone here shoot pool?” you may easily tell him where to go.

## Craft beer business brewing goodwill in Machias

by Michael R. Brown

Justine, a graduate of UMM in Education, has been a bartender and waitress at Skywalker’s since May. She was ready with the information about the beers, the food, and the entertainment.

I asked the journalist’s test question: “Have you got Wild Turkey 101?”

Justine’s reply: “No. I don’t know why. We get a lot of calls for it.”

Music is the entertainment most evenings, with one night offered for open mike. I asked what sort of entertainment that provided. Justine said, “You can bring a guitar. Whatever.”

“Ever do any poetry?”

“That would be great.”

“Why?”

“Anything that’s different is cool.”

Phil is the chef who is responsible for some of the new Irish Bar Menu, a change from the formerly Tex-Mex specialties. He and Danielle are conferring on further changes. Phil is well-established in the area, having run the food operation at the Big Stop for five years. John and Danielle Parker have owned Skywalker’s for four years.

If you have heard about John’s new obsession with craft brews you might want to come in now,

and then in a month or so. The crafts are not yet on tap inside. In fact, the brewing area is a

(Craft beer business pg. 12)

## Theatre project goals

20 permanent planters along the theatre’s Main Street front. They also hosted a live show and paddle art auction emceed by Downeast humorist Tim Sample. This past September the volunteer contingent also hosted 400-plus BikeMaine cyclists on site. Both events illustrated the growing community role of this little theatre’s comeback.

Partnering with others in the community, the theatre joined area businesses to host Christmas on Main Street. A parade, caroling and holiday vendors provided the backdrop for a community Christmas tree in front of the theatre, also labeled a memory tree, in remembrance of those no longer here.

As of December 31, 2016, the project had raised over \$71,000 from more than 130 donors. One month later that figure was \$75,000. The enthusiastic early cry of “Bring Back the Milbridge Theatre!” is achieving very real results. With a goal of \$95,000, \$76,000 has been

## Three words construct community caring

The CCC sprang up in 2007 to address the urgent need of Washington County’s at-risk infants, young children and their families. Founded by Marjorie Withers, one part of the goal was to create a strength-based system of care that would meet these emerging needs in order to improve outcomes for our youngest population and their families. The second goal was the creation of a collaborative that removed barriers between agencies, and worked together to more efficiently marshal their collective resources. It is the classic “the sum is greater than the parts” strategy.

In addition to its work on shared issues such as addressing poverty and deepening authentic collaboration, the CCC also develops viable means of measuring its impact across agencies and in the lives of community members. In fact, for a person so focused on people, Martin-Berry has an enviable command of numbers, especially “1%”. “It’s all about moving the needle,” she says with a military general’s matter-of-fact conviction. “One percent is doable. It’s something everyone can get their arms around. Everyone can change 1% of the problem, right?”

And that’s Martin-Berry’s mantra. One percent

“Twenty-percent of Washington County residents are living in poverty,” she said. “That’s 6,400 people out of 32,000. One percent is 64 people. Per year. In five years that’s 640 real, living human beings whose lives we fundamentally change. That’s a lot of people!” Martin-Berry goes on to point out that if you look further at child and family poverty, there’s 3,700 people in poor families with children under 18. One percent equals 37 people. “Towns can really get their arms around that,” she emphasizes. “That’s an



*Caring. Collaborative. Community. Three distinct words. Yet each one inherently dependent upon and related to the other two. Community Caring Collaborative is the official name of a 10-year-old, Washington County nonprofit organization. However, mix those words up, and no matter how you stack it, every combination still paints pretty much the same picture -- a shared effort to make a related group of people better. “The name was intentional,” Charlie Martin Berry said last Tuesday as the featured guest at the Machias Rotary’s ongoing and free-to-the-public education series. “Powerful words that you can put in any order. And it means the same thing.” In Washington County, where it can be challenging to keep all the organizational acronyms straight, she adds, “People mix them up all the time. But it’s purposefully designed not to matter. You get the message.”*

Photo by Bill Kitchen

attainable goal.”

From asset management and program training, to at-risk and educational initiatives; from immediate need and emergency resources, to long-term planning and economic security, the CCC operates from a drone’s eye view, working for individuals and families, young and old.

Community Caring Collaborative, no matter how you say it, it still means better. And with Martin-Berry running the numbers, the odds are 1%

changes everything.

To learn more visit [www.CCCMaine.org](http://www.CCCMaine.org). The Machias Rotary meets Tuesdays at the Bluebird Restaurant and the public is always welcome. On February 28 the speaker is Sarah Dedmon, owner of Pine Tree Cottage Rentals. (This meeting will be at the Kay Parker Building for the Pancake Supper fundraiser.) The speaker on March 7 will be UMM Interim President Sue Huseman.

continued from page 1

raised as of this date. Recently nine donors gave \$1,000 each to the project.

“We’re looking ahead to community summer events, like Milbridge Days,” says Woerner, who is also SCAI artistic director. “And we’re beginning to be a corps of volunteers who are spearheading projects of their own, like the paddle art auction, which was very successful. We’ve had a groundswell of support ... there are so many ways to give. You can give money, or time ... many show up for clean-up, or planting.”

“The \$95,000 goal was for phases one, two and three,” explains Richard Bondurant, Gateway treasurer. “To raise funds for the property, legal work associated with the project, to develop a business plan and to have initial design options in place. This has all been completed.”

“We’re going into phase three right now, which is to remove the existing structure and also to save

items that we can eventually use. Like the popcorn machine, some of the seats, the old projector. We’ll take these and preserve them. Then we’ll stabilize the property with green space.”

According to Bondurant, phase four will be the final planning and the construction of the new building. The current estimate for this phase is \$396,000. Obviously, much fundraising is a big part of the project’s future.

“We got involved last August,” says Dave Pinkham of himself and his wife, Rhonda. “The goal right now is to have the building removed. We’d like to have it done by the first of April. We want to be relevant and show signs of making progress. We want to be part of Milbridge Days (July 29). We have some motivated and talented people on the board. We may be taking small steps, but we’re moving forward.”

Pinkham, who is also on the building committee, cites another demographic. “The

out-of-state community also has a robust presence with this project,” he says.

Project goals for 2017 include paying off the purchase price of the property, razing the existing building, creating a park and outside event space on site, continued fundraising, hosting more community events, strengthening Milbridge Days and displaying more banners and flags through town.

Simultaneously, ongoing community projects are part of the town’s revitalization efforts and are self-funded. These undertakings do not use any donations made to the theatre project. Sales of baked goods, t-shirts and raffles provide the financing for these other events.

Gateway: Milbridge operates as a nonprofit. For additional information visit their website <https://gatewaymilbridge.com>, or call the office, (207) 546-1823.