

Volume 36 Issue 1

Winter ~ 2026

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Discussions Underway to Merge Library and Community Center

by Catherine O'Callaghan,
President, Lydia's Friends

"A public library is the most democratic thing in the world. What can be found there has undone dictators and tyrants."
—Doris Lessing

Lydia's Friends, Inc. serves as the friends-of-the-library group for Dummerston's Lydia Taft Pratt Library (LTPL). We are committed to promoting the success of our town library located in the Dummerston Community Center at 150 West Street. We have had a busy fall raising funds for our library, hosting events for our community, and advocating for our community library.

Perhaps most importantly, we have been participating in the discussions of a working group, initiated by the selectboard and facilitated by Selectperson Tom Nolan, regarding the reasons for and logistics of combining the library and the Community Center, currently two independent organizations using the same building, into one entity with a shared mission and goals.

When the schoolboard moved the K-2 classes from the West School to the East School in 1995, ownership of this historic building was assumed by the selectboard. A group of residents interested in preserving the building as a community resource formed an organization named the Dummerston Community Center (DCC) and acquired non-profit 501(c)(3) status. The selectboard has leased

the building to this organization for a dollar annually in return for the DCC assuming all the expenses of running it, save for any major capital expenses such as replacing the roof, which the selectboard will budget and pay for. DCC expenses include its own liability insurance, electric and fuel accounts, and such services as snow plowing, lawn mowing, and cleaning. On the revenue side, the Community Center is one of the only public buildings in town with spaces for large gatherings.

Currently, regularly-scheduled events during the week include: music lessons on Sunday, cribbage on Monday night, tai chi classes on Tuesday mornings, as well as some official town meetings and rentals for birthday parties and other family gatherings. Lydia's Friends has been delighted

to host our events this year in the community room. We are grateful for the foresight of the people who stepped up to take on the responsibility for preserving this building as a valuable community resource.

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PHOTO BY HANNAH PICK

It takes a good-sized group of volunteers to accomplish the restocking work of the Foodshelf.

Putney Foodshelf Serves as a Dummerston Oasis for Healthy Food and Hope

By Meg Lyons and Bill Schmidt
Dummerston Cares' Board Members

"We're on a fixed income and have medical expenses not covered by insurance. Without the Putney Foodshelf, our house would be hungry for half the month. It's a lifesaver for us."

—Putney Foodshelf Shopper

Spend a morning at the Putney Foodshelf and you're sure to hear stories like this one from an increasing number of shoppers, now estimated to be 185 each week. In fact, since 2020 the number of weekly shoppers has increased by a staggering 250%, and this trend is expected to continue, both locally and across the country. Last year alone, twenty Dummerston families, our friends and neighbors, visited the Foodshelf for the first time.

While it is physically located in the village of Putney, the Foodshelf is also Dummerston's food pantry. Since 2012 it has been

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PHOTO BY LINDA DECARLO BURNS

Library board members pitched in to help make the annual Dummerston Community Center gingerbread house event a success.

The following article has been added to the town meeting warning:

Article 13: Shall the voters authorize the Lydia Taft Pratt Library Trustees to change the name of the library to the "Dummerston Community Center and Library," reflecting the merger of the Dummerston Community Center and the Library.

The *Views of Dummerston* is a quarterly newsletter published by a group of citizen volunteers since 1990, and has non-profit status through the Dummerston Community Center. Mary Lou McBean had the original vision for and was first editor of the *Views*, and Gary Blomgren created the original masthead art.

The current steering committee includes Roger Turner (editor), Michelle Cherrier (co-articles coordinator and calendar), Fred Lee (layout), Sara Ryan (ad coordinator), Linda Rood (co-articles coordinator), and Lee Ives Tice (mailing). We always welcome new interest in joining the committee.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

The *Views* is mailed free of charge to all residents of the town of Dummerston. It is also available online at viewsofdummerston.org. We encourage people to help us save printing and mailing expenses by cancelling their print subscription and accessing the *Views* online at viewsofdummerston.org; to do so please email Sara Ryan at: subscribeonline@viewsofdummerston.org. If you are not a resident of Dummerston and would prefer to receive a paper copy of the *Views*, you may subscribe for an annual cost of \$5. Mail a check made payable to *Views of Dummerston*, with your name and mailing address to Lee Tice, 230 School House Rd., East Dummerston, VT 05346.

ARTICLES:

We welcome all articles related in any way to the town of Dummerston, including news of town organizations, personalities, history, or activities. Email Microsoft Word documents (preferred) to: articles@viewsofdummerston.org. Typed or hand-written articles can also be sent to: Michelle Cherrier, 72 Miller Rd., East Dummerston, VT 05346.

CALENDAR:

Any (non-commercial) event you would like listed on our Calendar of Events should be emailed to: calendar@viewsofdummerston.org, or mailed to Michelle Cherrier at the above address.

NEXT ISSUE:

Submissions due: March 24, 2026

Views will be mailed on: May 6, 2026

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Discussions Underway to Merge Library and Community Center

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The library is a public organization; library trustees are elected, the library is funded through the town's annual budget, and there are state statutes which govern library activities and finances. The library trustees therefore make annual requests to the selectboard for their budget, and once it is approved, have independent authority to spend that money.

Back in the 90's, the library began renting a room from the DCC in the town-owned Community Center building, using money from their town budget, an arrangement which illustrates the complications of the current system. While this new room enabled the library to move from a mere nook in the West Dummerston Grange building cloak room (see accompanying "Lydia Taft Pratt Library History") which had been serving as the town library space, the library has since become not only a space for a collection of books, but also a hub for information, technology, and children's programs causing a real strain on available space. A recent grant has enabled the library to rent an additional room specifically for children's resources and programs.

These town organizations have served us well and can serve us even better in the future. It makes perfect sense that two organizations—an over one-hundred-year-old library and the Community Center—join forces since we share so much. We will be more effective and stronger as one organization. In December, for instance, Lydia's Friends collaborated with the Community Center to make sure that the

annual gingerbread house decorating party was held. As usual this well-attended event fostered bonds across generations and across the West River. We wanted to co-host this event because we believe it is important to demonstrate that even as organizational structures change, there will be continuity of beloved events.

Our contribution to the ongoing discussion has been to encourage community engagement and remind us all that **a library is a community center**. Through the years, libraries have evolved into a presence in communities where everyone is welcome, resources are free, and many different kinds of activities occur—from games and clubs, to book groups, craft nights, and community dialogue. As Dummerston moves forward to consider the creation of the Dummerston Community Center and Library, keep in mind that one entity will harness the new energy in town and the desire to build community. As a rural community we need our own place to gather, sip tea, catch up on local news, and build friendships. Lydia's Friends is optimistic about this proposed transition and looks forward to creating and celebrating community in Dummerston.

In other news, on every other Wednesday this past fall from 1-2 p.m. we held an informal conversation group, Café Español, at the library. In October we hosted visiting Irish writer Peter Keenan, whose presentation *Judas, Midrash and that Kiss: From Desolation to Hope* led to a thought-provoking, moving discussion amongst attendees. All are welcome to join us at future Cafés.

Happily, we held our first Take-A-Break at Exit One on I91 and our many volunteers and splendid weather made it a great success. As this was our first experience hosting a Take-A-Break, we were helped by Kathy Ellor of the Kiwanis Club—an example of collaboration between nonprofits. This past fall we also began collecting food donations in a container outside of the Community Center which we have then delivered to the Putney Food Shelf.

Lydia's Friends meets the second Thursday of the month at 5 p.m. in the library and all are welcome. As a new nonprofit, we are actively recruiting members and welcome any level of involvement because no contribution is too small. If you are interested in helping out, call Catherine O'Callaghan at 802-380-7935 or email catherineocallaghan32@gmail.com.



Dummerston Cares is grateful to
our friends at

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REMOVAL**

for "quietly" partnering with us to
make a recent community
clean-up project a success!

The Views of Dummerston Mission Statement

Providing reports of town organizations, and stories of townspeople and their good deeds, in promoting cooperation and understanding toward creating a more "ideal" Dummerston.
"All who read may also contribute!"—Mary Lou McBean, founder, *Views of Dummerston*

town government

Dummerston Selectboard

FY27 Budget Ready for Town Meeting Consideration

By Todd Davidson

The selectboard spent the autumn and early winter working on a recommendation for the Dummerston municipal budget. Fiscal year 2027 (FY27) begins on July 1, 2026 and runs through June 30, 2027. Funding areas remain the same as in past years: general fund, highway fund, capital plan, highway structures fund, and blasting and crushing. Note that all town employees are getting a +2.7% cost-of-living adjustment. Overall, our recommendation is for an increase of 13.02% in the town budget for FY27, which would equate to about a 2.6% increase to individual property tax bills. **General Fund:** This fund has the most individual line items and covers what can be considered all of the non-highway, daily operations of the town. It includes non-highway

payroll, all payroll taxes, health insurance, administration and services, sheriff and animal control, the Dummerston Volunteer Fire Department (DVFD), the library, and health and welfare organizations, to name a few. For FY27 our recommendations for this fund result in an increase of 13.9% (\$93,856) over the current budget. A summary of needle-moving increases includes the following line items:

Hours/budget for town clerk : +\$6,921
Hours/budget for town treasurer: +\$6,797
Hours/budget for assistant town clerk: +\$11,936

The additional hours for the clerk and treasurer are to provide enough pay for surge periods during and around upcoming elections. In planning for the March 2027-June 2028 period when the town will have a new clerk and treasurer, we've added hours to the assis-

tant town clerk line to ensure we have some funding for our outgoing clerk and treasurer to train our new employees.

Selectboard assistant: +\$10,426

After not funding, nor having success in hiring, an assistant, we've added the funding back into the budget in hope of eventually bringing on a part-time employee to assist the selectboard with minutes, agendas, budget planning, and projects.

Reappraisal Transfer Fund: +\$5,000

Our listers and the town have been notified that a full Grand List reappraisal must be done in the near future. We have a contract for the reappraisal that most likely won't begin until 2029 or 2030, but we need to build a fund over the coming years to cover costs.

Sheriff's Department Contract: +\$4,500

We are increasing our number of patrol hours on Dummerston roads. Of note, we will also be hosting a forum in the near future to discuss options for reducing speeds on our roads.

Dummerston Volunteer Fire Department: +\$41,214

This number reflects a combination of an increase to operating expenses (+\$14,539) and an increase in capital expenditures (\$26,675). The increase in capital funding is due to the need to purchase new radios and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) gear in FY27. The DVFD plans to fundraise throughout FY27 and this line item already takes into account those efforts.

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Dummerston Fire Department

Department Structure Has Many Moving Parts

by Dan Ridlehoover

Happy winter, Dummerston! In our on-going effort to share the ins and outs of our community's fire department, we've decided to share a little bit in this issue of the *Views* about how the department is staffed, what sorts of roles exist within the department, and how we manage our core responsibility of showing up when called for.

Volunteer Roles: The Dummerston Fire Department operates on a 100%, all-volunteer basis. No members receive any sort of hourly wage, stipend, or tax break. Increasingly, this is a rare arrangement within the fire service world. At our core, we are operational personnel who train for and respond to fire and EMS calls. Annually, our members collectively put thousands of hours of time into the department. We maintain our fleet, our equipment, our facilities, and our hydrant systems. We conduct training to achieve and maintain professional certifications. We respond on zero notice, at all hours, in all weathers, to all hazards for unknown durations. A response may take 40 minutes, or it may take eight hours.

The department has members who volunteer to serve on our organization's board of directors, which provides oversight, strategy, and leadership. There are also members of the department's auxiliary who organize

fundraising and events. These folks have taken the lead in fundraising (golf tournaments, chicken BBQ, raffles) and non-fundraising community events such as Touch a Truck and our Youth Fishing Derby. There are kind folks who show up to help in day-of capacities (tag sale, pancakes, etc.). There are apparatus committees, training leaders, point people for our state EMS license, folks who review and prepare our budgets, representatives for state and county-level associations, radios/telecommunications technicians, and others. Some of us even get to write articles for Dummerston's most distinguished community publications.

Responding to Calls: One of the most common questions I get from community members is, "How does volunteering work? Do you have to sign up for shifts?" That is a great question, and the simple answer is, "No, we do not do shifts." The more nuanced

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town government

Dummerston Conservation Commission

Individual Restoration Projects Add Up

By Bill Conley

As the new year dawns and you contemplate if New Year's resolutions are worth the trouble (perhaps, as you read this, they've already gone by the wayside), consider the many ways in which conservation of the natural world and its benefits and wonders should be tops on your list. The Conservation Commission is hoping you consider the different meanings of conservation; our chair, Christine Goepp, has created a pamphlet summarizing different actions that might be defined as "conservation." It's available at the town office or www.dummerstonconservation.com. Consider too that conservation has to include restoration. In the increasingly warming world we inhabit, species and habitat loss is a given. Restoration seeks to return land to a healthy, functioning ecological state.

Invasive plants that reduce biodiversity in our region are an increasing problem for the simple reason that they're not part of our complex, mutually-dependent ecosystem. In other words, these plants grow and spread without any natural controls, nothing is adapted to eat them or live in them, and they crowd out native plants that do support other wildlife. They threaten the myriad non-human species that are vital to our own health and appreciation of the natural world.

So, can you check your own property for invasives that choke out important native trees, shrubs, and undergrowth that could thrive and restore habitat if they were removed?

Can you plant more native trees and shrubs and garden plants that provide food and forage

for our insect, avian, and animal neighbors?

Can you reduce your lawn, if needed, to make the above happen?

Can you put up birdhouses to provide more nesting opportunities for our year-round and seasonal bird populations?

Is there space where you live to feed birds using a variety of feeders suitable to different feeding needs of our native and visiting birds?

Can you support efforts to maintain clean water in our rivers and streams and groundwater, the lifeblood for all living creatures?

Can you leave dead standing trees to provide homes for the multiple critters and birds that rely on them and need them to make and use nesting cavities?

If your answer is yes to any of these questions, then you are saying yes to restoration as part of conservation in your own backyard. If enough of us said yes to these questions, we would engage in what Doug Tallamy, biologist and conservation advocate, calls creating a network of "homegrown national parks." If a critical mass of us commit to this, then there is hope that we can restore what we have lost in bird populations, pollinators, micro and megafauna, and the health and happiness benefits that come with restoration of the natural world. The Conservation Commission endeavors to help with any and all of these efforts but we can't do it alone. Ask yourself what you might do individually or with your neighbors to *restore*, this year and beyond. Conservation Commission member Debbie Miller has authored a guide to invasives that will

be available by the time you read this. And stay in touch with us if you have any questions about your "restoration bucket list." The members of the commission are your neighbors and have ideas and resources to help you. They are Christine Goepp, Ron Svec, Debbie Miller, Lew Teich, David Greenwalt, Jesse Wagner, Lynn Levine, and Bill Conley. You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter at our website, www.dummerstonconservation.com, as well as various publications on trails, invasives, and conservation actions which are available at the town office, library, and website.

Please email us at info@dummerstonconservation.com if you have questions or feedback.

Recent and Future Projects

The Conservation Commission is always brainstorming and planning for community gatherings where speakers can inform us about conservation topics. Stay tuned to our newsletter, website, and newspaper announcements of speakers. For example, in October we held a work day at Prospect Hill, a town-owned gem of a resource with a 2.5 acre clearing at the top and sweeping views of Monadnock to the east and the Green Mountains to the west. Commission members and community volunteers cleared a sizable patch of invasive buckthorn and bittersweet from near the summit. A multi-step plan to remove and manage buckthorn on the opposite, west-facing downward slope is in the works for later in 2026.

The Commission is also planning to team up with the Connecticut River Conservancy to create teams for the CRC's annual Source to Sea cleanup of the Connecticut River on Sept. 18 and 19th 2026. Stay tuned for how you might be involved.

You may already know about our "conservation stations" around town. These are conservation and nature themed versions of Little Free Libraries where you can borrow and donate books. The most recent one was installed in front of the town office, designed and built by Lew Teich. Plans are in the works for a butterfly-themed conservation station at the Dummerston School, and the longest-lived station is at the corner of Hague and Green Mountain Camp Roads. Check them out!

We are also working on a dedicated shelf at the Lydia Pratt Taft Library where you can browse and check out recommended conservation-related books and other materials.

Anyone is welcome to visit us in person during our meetings held in the town office on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6 p.m.



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organizations

Putney Foodshelf Serves as a Dummerston Oasis for Healthy Food and Hope



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welcoming area families in need, including from Putney, Westminster, and Brattleboro, as well as Dummerston, and providing nutritious food each week at no charge.

In fiscal year 2025 there were 457 visits by Dummerston households to the Foodshelf. Counting the number of people in each household, the Foodshelf provided Dummerston residents food 1,451 times.

At town meeting on March 3, voters will be asked to consider an article requesting that the town of Dummerston contribute \$3,000 to the Putney Foodshelf. In order for this to be brought before voters, last fall the Putney Foodshelf submitted its first-ever application to Dummerston's Social Services Committee for \$3,000, a request that members of the committee support.

It's worth noting that the town of Putney last year provided the Foodshelf with \$7,830 through its social services budget, the town of Westminster \$5,000, and the town of Brattleboro \$7,500. Now the time has come for Dummerston to join neighboring towns with its own financial support for the Foodshelf.

By now we're all aware of the federal budget cuts that are straining the capacity of ALL food shelves across our country, and the Putney Foodshelf is no exception. According to Hannah Pick, executive director of the Putney Foodshelf, "The growing number of families in need, fueled by affordability issues and cuts to federal programs, is creating a budgetary challenge for the Foodshelf. We

have had to cut essential non-food items from the budget, such as diapers and toilet paper, but we are committed to providing essential groceries, and finding new sources of funding

to make that possible. We are encouraged by the growing awareness in Dummerston of our need for support."

A first-time contribution to the Foodshelf by the town of Dummerston couldn't come at a more crucial time.

During the past year, Dummerston Cares has been actively working with the staff of the Putney Foodshelf. Most notably, our first all-community food drive last fall—with terrific help from Dummerston School students and families—was a huge success. 1,600 pounds of shelf-stable foods as well as financial gifts were donated by Dummerston residents. We now have an opportunity to build on that support in a very tangible way.

All of us on the Cares Board are not just excited but inspired to be partnering with the Putney Foodshelf's dedicated team. Simply put, we don't want any of our neighbors to go hungry!

Dummerston Cares strongly supports a \$3,000 addition to the town's Social Services budget for the Putney Foodshelf, and we encourage your "yes" vote at town meeting.



Volunteers pass food from a Vermont Foodbank delivery truck into the Foodshelf's quarters in the Putney Community Center, located in Christian Square.



A nice variety of fresh produce is assembled by a group of volunteers.

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Transfer Station Now Has Separate Bin for Mixed Paper

By **Alex Lacy**, Outreach Coordinator,
and **Michelle Cherrier**,
Dummerston Representative

Mixed paper update: We have recently added a bin specifically for mixed paper in the recycling area next to the bin for glass. New signs identify its location. Mixed paper includes office paper, magazines, soft-cover books, cereal boxes, egg cartons, and manila folders with no metal in them.

The mixed paper bin also accepts one material that deserves special mention: shredded paper! Shredded paper can be added to the mixed paper bin either in a paper bag or loose — no plastic bags, ever, please! Also please never add anything with coated paper such as milk/juice/ice cream cartons.

Adding this new bin is an effort to take some of the heaviest materials out of the single stream bin and to keep the paper materials cleaner so they have a better chance of being recycled. The cost to process single stream recycling has been steadily rising over the past year. By separating mixed paper from the single stream mix we will reduce WSWMD's costs to have our single stream recycling sorted at the Rutland Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). We're hopeful that this change in practices will clean up our paper recycling efforts and help to keep you all more engaged in the recycling process.

Cardboard update: The transfer station also

has two separate bins for cardboard, one on either side of the two single stream bins. We prefer only broken-down cardboard boxes in the bin with the thin slot to put the materials through. If you bring a large load of cardboard for recycling, you may talk to the folks at the scale house and take the cardboard directly to our MRF where we bale up cardboard. Tape and staples are okay since these materials get separated when the cardboard is put through a series of baths that separate non-paper/non-cardboard material. Greasy pizza boxes and anything stained with food or machine-related oil, are not acceptable. Dry is preferable but cardboard that is only a little damp is okay. Oh, and remember that cereal boxes belong in the mixed paper bin.

You may wonder what becomes of these recycled materials? The staff hauls these large roll-off containers of cardboard and mixed paper into our MRF where we sort out greasy cardboard, frozen food boxes, cereal boxes, waxed cardboard, paper cartons ("coated paper" or "aseptic containers"), as well as plastic. We then bale the cardboard

and the mixed paper (one bale is a 1,200 pound compressed cube bound by metal wire) and ship them in tractor trailer loads to processing mills. If the mills determine that a load exceeds their standards for contamination it is sent back to us at our expense, and we have to open them up, sort through, and do it all over again. It's an intensely expensive endeavor and so we strive to make what goes in each category as clean as possible. However, it is hard to keep up with changing requirements from processing mills, and when folks hear instructions on how to recycle they tend to hold onto those "facts" for 15 years without changing practices.

Are you curious how it all works at the Rutland MRF? Check out this YouTube video showing how things get sorted after they leave WSWMD: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ub46MvKExp4


We want to keep our district customers/recyclers up-to-date-with the ever-changing requirements of the haulers and the companies that process our recycled materials. We appreciate you keeping yourselves informed.

BDCC Offers Business Development Support

By **Aashna Kinkhabwala**

The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) is now accepting applications for its new **Strategic Planning Working Group**, beginning in early 2026. This initiative is designed for employers who

have built teams of at least four employees, have been operating for three or more years, and are ready to take on a significant growth initiative. The program will convene a small, select group of eight to ten employers for a series of confidential, peer-based working sessions. Participants will bring forward specific projects or strategic goals, such as expanding into new markets, launching a product, or strengthening internal systems and leadership capacity. The format draws on the mastermind approach, offering both structured facilitation and one-on-one mentoring opportunities. Interested? To apply to the working group, go to the website www.cognitoforms.com/BDCC1/_20252026StrategicPlanningGroupInquiryForm




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organizations

Dummerston Historical Society

Talks and Photo Exhibits Are Lined Up for 2026

By the Historical Society Board

Though winter storms are currently testing our sturdy resolve here in Dummerston, the new year will be well-established and spring will be on your minds as you read this article. As 2026 stretches before us, we would like to take this opportunity to invite you to attend our quarterly meetings/programs and to visit our exhibits. All of our events are advertised in local media and are listed on our website, www.dummerstonhistoricalsociety.org. We are open throughout the year on the first and third Sundays of every month from 1-3 p.m. Watch for exhibit details and occasional special programs. We hope to see you there.

Our annual meeting is held in January and we expect to elect officers and present a program and a new exhibit. Officers elected were President Muriel Taylor, Vice-President Chuck Fish, Secretary Sara Ryan, Treasurer Ruth Hoffman, Director Gail Sorenson, with Directors John Pinkney, Gary Miller, and Bess Richardson continuing. There was one vacancy because, as we are sad to report, Jody Normandeau retired after some fifty years of faithful service. She joined the society at its inception and contributed in every way possible, including many years as treasurer. She was honored at the meeting for all her good work.

January's special events were an illustrated talk by George Kohout, "The History of the Black Mountain Quarries of Dummerston, Vermont" and a student art exhibit, "Art from the Dummerston School." George told us about the tools used to split the rock, the technique for lifting and transporting the massive blocks, the many finished uses for the granite, and the quarries' crucial role in Dummerston's economy.

For the first time, but we hope not the last, Dummerston's middle school artists gave us much to please the eye. The students'

accomplishments made us grateful for the rich opportunities of many kinds offered at our school, and on this occasion, we were especially grateful to art teacher Ben Ferguson. A formal opening of this exhibit will be held later.

Looking ahead, April's quarterly meeting will feature medical historian Julie Johnson-McGrath's talk, "Why the Heck Were Doctors Always Bleeding People?" Julie will explain that before germ theory, doctors thought that illness was caused by the body being out of balance, having too much or too little blood, bile, or phlegm. We are also looking forward to two photography exhibits. Len Oppenheim will draw on his rich archive for an Artist's Corner

presentation (April, May, June), and Chuck Fish will offer a wide-ranging selection called "Farms, Fairs, Rivers, and Roads: Looking Back at Ninety" (July, August, September).

The Dummerston Historical Society always welcomes donations of historical interest to Dummerston, and we encourage you to join us in 2026 as a member, a volunteer, a participant in our programs, or as a viewer of our exhibits. Find more information and videos of recent programs at www.dummerstonhistoricalsociety.org. Please note that you do not need to be a member of the society to attend any of our functions. Our Schoolhouse is handicapped accessible. You are always welcome.

A Short History of the Lydia Taft Pratt Library

From: DUMMERSTON, An "Equivalent Lands" Town, 1753-1986

"Liddy," as she was called by her friends, is still remembered by a few who in their childhood knew her as their teacher at the Bridge School in West Dummerston. A lovable and thoughtful personality, Miss Taft soon became Mrs. Taft Pratt and moved to Greenfield, Mass, where she and her husband spent the rest of their long and useful lives. One of Mrs. Pratt's wishes at the last was that the little library of books which she had used as a teacher might be brought back to West Dummerston and used as the nucleus of a village library. Maud Taft, a close relative, took that responsibility.

With no building available for use as a library, Ida Sargeant opened her home for

the purpose and became the first librarian. After her death, others carried on the work, moving the books from home to home of new librarians until sometime after 1921, when the West Dummerston Grange members remodeled the Grange cloak room to be used as a library, free of charge. Money for new books or whatever expenses were involved, which is now paid for by the town was for many years raised by suppers and dances put on by the village folk.

Addendum: After the West Dummerston School classes were incorporated into the East Dummerston School in 1995, the library moved into one of the classrooms in the vacated building, and the selectboard provided funds to rent the room from the newly formed Dummerston Community Center Board.

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Calendar Photographs Needed

**Do you have a nice photo of
a Dummerston Scene?**

The 2026 Scenes of Dummerston Calendar is a stunner! And now the Historical Society is seeking photos for the 2027 Scenes of Dummerston Calendar.

No need for professional photographs; phone photos are perfect! Just make them landscape (horizontal) and without any identifiable people.

Please send photos to Sheila Pinkney at:
dummerstoncalendar@gmail.com.

**if your photo is selected you will receive a free
2027 calendar!**



school news



Winter Solstice Gathering

During a beautiful sunny morning on December 18th, the whole school community gathered around a warm fire to mark the return of the light at our sixth annual winter solstice gathering. The program included PreK leading us in the song, "Light is Returning," Grade six students sharing poetry, and the Middle School chorus performing "The Solstice Song" written and arranged by the late Peter Amidon. Middle School teacher Keith Marshall also provided a lesson on the science behind the solstice, demonstrating the manner in which the earth tilts, spins, and rotates around the sun.



Winter Activity Sports for Grades 1-8 Features Ski and Skate

The winter activity season is underway! Thanks to the support of staff, family volunteers, and donors, Dummerston School students get to participate in six weeks of programming at Mt. Snow or the Nelson Withington Ice Skating Facility at Living Memorial Park. Thank you to everyone who makes this program possible!



Southern Vermont Natural History Museum Works with PreK and Kindergarten

The Southern Vermont Natural History Museum and Pool Nature Center educators have begun monthly lessons and activities with PreK and K students focused on native wildlife behaviors and the ecosystems that support them. During the first visit in January, educator Anna brought to school Allister, an adult barred owl! Students learned all about owls in winter and how their prey have adapted in order to survive, including what they eat and how they burrow. Their study included identifying animal tracks on snowy walks, and they believe they may have found the tracks of a red fox!



school Allister, an adult barred owl! Students learned all about owls in winter and how their prey have adapted in order to survive, including what they eat and how they burrow. Their study included identifying animal tracks on snowy walks, and they believe they may have found the tracks of a red fox!



Birchmore Builders Outfits Music Program with Band Instruments!

Thanks to an incredibly generous donation from Joey Birchmore with Birchmore Builders, our music program is now equipped with a full band's worth of modern band instruments including three electric guitars, two electric basses, and a rack to hold all of them, and five amplifiers, an electric keyboard, and a whole drum set! Students have already begun enjoying these new instruments in our middle school modern band exploratory class and can't wait to perform with them at our Winter Concert on February 18th.

school news



Outdoors and In, Students' Mental and Physical Growth Doesn't Slow in Winter



December in the PreK

Out of all our classes, it's the PreK students who spend the most time outside in the winter, and December was no exception. *Snow* is a huge hit for the PreK, and daily activities include hiking and playing in the snow, sledding, and shoveling. These experiences provide core muscle strength which in turn leads to the fine motor coordination needed for writing; they also provide multiple opportunities for social skills and for learning how to keep our bodies warm. PreK students set up a suet bird feeder at stump circle, and work on their new house in the woods. Each week during the winter months, PreK students enjoy a weekly fire tended by parent volunteers. During their first fire in December, students crushed herbs harvested from the garden and added them into soup, which was also made from beans and kale from the school garden.



First and Second Graders learn with Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center



During our Winter Activities weeks, grades one and two are exploring the amazing world of winter in our school forest! Through hands-on winter ecology games and activities students play and learn about winter and animal behaviors.

Music Concert Features *Deeper Shade of Soul*

On November 19th, the Dummerston School community enjoyed a spectacular Middle School concert directed by music teacher Nathaniel Evans. Five ensembles performed, including Middle School Chorus, Intermediate Band, Advanced Band, and Jazz Band. The Modern Band made their debut with a fantastic performance of *Deeper Shade of Soul* by Urban Dance Squad. This is Mr. Evans' third year as instrumental music teacher and first year as general music teacher.



Walk-a-thon funds Basketball uniforms

The Dummerston Middle School basketball team launched their season with a successful walk/run-a-thon for the whole community on Dummerston School's new Community Walking Trail. Players used the proceeds of this fundraiser to buy new uniforms. Thank you to all the runners and walkers! Kelsey Parker is returning as head coach with volunteer support from retired long-time coach John Pinkney. Check out the basketball schedule on our school website, and join us for a home game.



Dummerston School**School Joins with Theatre Adventure For Disability Program***By Julianne Eagan, Principal*

Dummerston School has been exploring the theme of disability justice this year and using this work as an opportunity to deepen our sense of belonging and commitment to inclusion across our whole school community and beyond. As part of this work, we have been honored to partner with the Theatre Adventure Program, thanks to a grant from the National

Endowment for the Arts and Humanities. Theatre Adventure offers year-round theater arts programming for artists with disabilities; they work to support these artists in claiming the stage with distinction and aim to create a world in which people with disabilities are valued as members of their community and recognized and respected as artists.

On October 2, the whole school was treated to a performance of TAP's original adapta-

tion of the classic folk tale "Stone Soup." On October 6, the troupe returned with director Laura Lawson-Tucker to lead the kindergarten and fifth grade in theatrical exercises. Students worked in partners to learn movement exercises that support physical expression, community, self-acceptance, and confidence. At our December All-School Meeting, Kindergarten and fifth grade students led all of us in learning these exercises together, and then introduced us to a schoolwide Stone Soup art project in which each student identified the special characteristic they bring to our school community and hung it on our shared bulletin board. As the troupe members taught us, "Take what you've got, and put it in the pot!"

We are excited to continue to work with the Theatre Adventure Program during the spring semester!

FY27 Budget Ready for Town Meeting Consideration*continued from page 3*

Highway Fund: This fund covers the operation of our highway department. It includes pay for our highway crew and everything else associated with keeping our roads in top-notch shape. For FY27 this fund recommendation has an increase of 1.8% (\$12,513).

Capital Fund: This fund is used to plan for large, durable future purchases for the town (trucks, plows, etc.) In FY26 we looked at the next five to ten years and built an annual budget amount that attempts to remove wild swings in annual contributions. As such, this year's budget recommendation of \$245,000 is level funded from FY26. Items that are to be paid for in FY27 are a new backhoe (\$192,000) and the first payment on a new fire truck (\$108,000).

Highway Structures Fund: This fund is for the maintenance and replacement of structures on our roads. Think about all the culverts as well as the two East-West Road bridges, one at the bottom of the hill just west of Partridge Road, and the other just east of the junction with Schoolhouse Road (commonly referred to as the Slab Hollow bridge) that need attention in the future. The road foreman has created a prioritized list for repair or replacement of the structures the town maintains (see Town Report) and we've planned for level funding between FY27 and the eventual need to replace the East-West Road bridges. Taking into account periodic grants, we will start funding at \$74,000 in this upcoming FY and continue with that number moving forward.

Blasting and Crushing Fund: This fund is used to provide sand and gravel from our existing pit as well as the future operational needs of the Dummerston/Putney pit. This item carries an increase of 6.3% (\$1,722) in FY27.

Lydia Taft Pratt (LTP) funding: An additional funding item within the General Fund addresses the funding needs of the Lydia Taft Pratt (LTP) library. The yearly operating fund dollars from the previous two budgets and the proposed budget for this coming year, all adjusted to exclude rent, are:

FY25: \$16,640

FY26: \$31,262

FY27: \$24,900

The increase in FY26 was driven by additional hours for the librarian. In addition, the town voted to extend programs that were originally funded by external grants for the remainder of the year.

Pert Flower Thrives In or Out of Water*By John Anderson*

Some years ago I noticed an unfamiliar shoreline wildflower. I quickly learned that one of the plant's common names was pert and its scientific name was *Gratiola aurea*. With that I had it neatly pigeon-holed. I knew the plant. Or so I thought.

I've since learned that pert is actually considered to be amphibious. It has an aquatic form which can grow in water up to 12 or 13 feet deep and it has a terrestrial form which grows on sandy or muddy shores. The two forms share almost no similarities. In fact, you would not think them to be the same species.

The aquatic form, *Gratiola aurea forma pusilla*, is a tiny sterile water plant usually less than one inch tall. It can grow and spread as a pond bottom weed but never flowers.

If water levels drop, any exposed plants then take on the larger terrestrial form, occasionally reaching heights of up to 12 inches. The stem and leaves of this form have a very different shape and texture than those of the aquatic form and conspicuous glandular leaf dots appear. In late summers, along sunny shorelines when water levels are low, pert produces the tubular half inch long bright golden-yellow flowers for which it's named. You would never imagine that terrestrial *Gratiola aurea* and non-flowering aquatic *Gratiola aurea forma pusilla* were the same plant.

Small colonies of pert flower along the earthen dam at Sunset Lake during those summers when water levels are drawn down. In years when the water levels remain high only *forma pusilla*, the tiny aquatic water

weed form of the plant, can be seen. Years-long inundations seem to have no negative impacts on the plant. When summertime water levels eventually drop, pert will quickly take on its terrestrial form and flower exuberantly.

Pert is also known as golden hedgehyssop or yellow hedgehyssop. It can be locally common. It is, as I've said, a shape-shifting amphibian taking on different forms under different growing conditions.

I first noticed the colonies of pert at Sunset Lake many decades ago during a summer when water levels were low and it was flowering profusely. I looked for it the next few summers before concluding, erroneously, that persistent high water levels had probably drowned it out. I was worried for nothing.

Pert is still there. Any summer when water levels have been drawn down it will be heartily flowering. And I now understand that the species, *Gratiola aurea*, is amphibious; it is as viable aquatically as it is terrestrially.

There are other amphibious plants you might see, notably smartweed (*Persicaria amphibia*) but none that I've yet seen or heard of are as confusingly two-formed as pert. It had me puzzling for years. Due to fluctuating water levels, flowering happened at seemingly random multi-year intervals. It shape-shifted. And it just didn't fit my preconceived ideas of how a flowering plant should behave.

Pert is either one odd aquatic plant or a pretty little shoreline wildflower—depending. It's an amphibian, as strange as that might seem.

Lydia Taft Pratt Library Sees a Year of Change

by **Dena Marger**,
Library Director

Wow, what a year of change 2025 was for Lydia Taft Pratt Library! Over the past year, we've made significant advances in our space, staffing, open hours, digital presence, and programming, and we're so grateful that our community has been part of that journey. Many of you know that thanks to significant grant funding from the *Building Bright Futures* program of the Vermont Early Childhood Fund, as well as the overwhelming support shown by Dummerston residents at last year's town meeting, we were able to double our floor space, to create a beautiful, dedicated children's library and literacy program. These developments have allowed us to hire an additional staff member and to expand our open hours (from 15 hours a week to 26), making the library more accessible to more people.

More staff time has also meant more outreach. In 2025, we revitalized our satellite library service at the luncheons at the Evening Star Grange and commenced class visits with students at Dummerston Elementary School, increasing our overall presence in the community. We were especially pleased to participate in various events at the elementary school, including an outreach event with the Dummerston *Girls on the Run* program, who invited the Lydia Taft Pratt Library to take part in their Community Impact Project.

In all the discussion around the library budget last year, the library was asked to demonstrate that a rise in funding would correlate to an increase in the usage of our valuable community resources. The results speak for themselves.

In 2025:

Visits to the library increased by **21.5%**

Materials borrowed increased by **18%**

The number of programs increased by **144%**
(from 54 to 132)

Program attendance increased by **424%**

The library is a public good, much like public schools or public roads. Even though not everyone has children, and not everyone uses every road, we all benefit from strong public infrastructure. In a small rural town, the library plays a vital role in promoting community connection and well-being, especially by countering the isolation that can affect seniors and others. We do this by being a safe, welcoming place and by offering programs and resources that are relevant to our community. We also provide equal access to information, technology, and educational support for people of all ages.

Behind the scenes, we've also been working hard to strengthen the library's online presence. In 2025, many people became library users specifically to access our digital collections, especially eBooks and audiobooks through OverDrive/Libby. We've improved our website, streamlined the online experience for users, and joined a library consortium that makes it easier than ever to access materials from other libraries.

For nearly three decades, very little changed at the Lydia Taft Pratt Library. This past year was different. We worked hard to improve staffing, open hours, and physical and digital resources. These changes were long overdue and would not have been possible without the support of our community.

Looking ahead, you may be asked at town meeting to vote on a library budget that

continues to support a 12-hour-per-week children's program position. It's important to understand that if we are unable to retain our children's staff, the children's programming that we've offered will be cut, and we will have to reduce our open hours as well.

We invite you to stay engaged with your library. Visit the space, attend a program, explore our online resources, and share your experience with neighbors. And when the library appears on the town meeting agenda, we hope you'll remember what these past changes have made possible and help us ensure that the library can continue to serve Dummerston as a welcoming, accessible, and vibrant community resource for years to come.

We hope to see you at the library soon.

Births

Mason Scott McDougall 10/29/25

Passings

Elinore Baker Towle 10/15/25

Michel Fernand Marie Legrand
11/10/25

Drew Clayton Banker 12/10/25

Robert Joseph LeClair, Sr.
12/26/25

Lillian G. Brooks 1/13/26

Time to Adopt a Book at Town Meeting

By **Linda Rood**

Please don't forget to come to the school library during town meeting to adopt one (or more) of the new books that the Friends of the Library has purchased for the school library this year. Friends volunteers will be there all day, starting at 9:30, until the meeting ends.

It's an easy stop when you come to vote, or a nice break during the meeting. We will be happy to see you, and you will help us continue to support our school library. The children of Dummerston will be grateful!

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Election 2026: Candidates' Statements

Long-time moderator Cindy Jerome has moved to Brattleboro, but with the consent of those present at town meeting, will serve as moderator a final time. Voting will determine next year's moderator, and only Glenn "Gavy" Kessler is on the ballot for this important position. Laurie Frechette and Chris Brown are running to be re-elected as town clerk and treasurer respectively.

Skip Fletcher is resigning from the selectboard after the first year of his three-year term, and Alex Lockie has stepped up to replace him. Tom Nolan is not running for reelection at the completion of his two-year term, and Terry Chapman, who has previously served on the selectboard, is running to return to office and replace him. Marie Glabach is unopposed seeking election to a three-year term.

Daniel Everlith and Paul Smith are competing to be Dummerston's representative on the Windham Southeast School District Board for a three-year term. Candidates for other offices, both running unopposed, are Ray Harris for a three-year auditor term and Matthew Leger for a three-year lister term replacing Charlotte Neer Annis who is retiring. No one is running for a library trustee opening. If one person gets 16 write-in ballots at the town meeting election, he/she would be elected. Otherwise, the selectboard will appoint someone to serve until the next town meeting. Additionally, at least three people are needed to fill out the Planning Commission, all positions that are appointed by the selectboard, with nobody yet showing any interest.

Our sincere appreciation to all who volunteer to serve the town.

TOWN CLERK

Laurie Frechette

1-year term

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your Town Clerk for the past ten years. That being said, this will be my last time running for Town Clerk. I turned 65 in November and believe it is time to consider retirement. I hope to continue working with/for our Town in some capacity (part-time).

If you are interested in learning more about what a Town Clerk does and possibly (hopefully) running for election in 2027, please reach out to me! My email address is townclerk@dummerston.org; the office telephone number is 802-257-1496. We have an incredible crew here at the Town Office; it is a wonderful place to work!

Everyone who works at the Town Office takes pride and pleasure in making it a friendly and welcoming place for you to visit. Feel free to stop by to see us!

I look forward to serving the Town for another year and ask for your vote on March 3rd. Thank you for placing your trust in me.

SELECTBOARD

Maria Glabach

3-year term

I am seeking re-election for the 3 year term. I have lived in Dummerston my entire life and feel that volunteerism is an essential part of contributing to our community. I have served on the Selectboard since 2017 and the Planning Commission since 2013.

Your vote of support would be appreciated.

Terry Chapman

2-year term

I am Terry Chapman from West Dummerston Village and I am running for the two year Select Board seat. I have previously served on the board for 4 years stepping down due to a family members health issue. I learned a lot during that time and enjoyed serving the residents of Dummerston. I would be honored to serve again on the board.

TOWN MODERATOR

Glenn "Gavy" Kessler

1-year term

I am always enamored by Town Meeting Day, seeing young and old come together to enact democracy. Heading to the ballot box together, engaging in debate, eating a community meal, learning about local organizations, hearing about the school, and selecting a library book to sponsor all create a kind of magic that I want to be a part of. For those who don't yet know me, my name is Gavy Kessler. I moved to Vermont ten years ago and live with my partner Chris Olsen on Canoe Brook Road. I am the Theater Director at the Putney School, where I also serve as a Board Trustee member,

and have also sat on the board of Main Street Arts in Saxtons River. Sitting at Town Meeting I have often admired the combination of charm and order that Cindy Jerome brings to our community, and have thought "I'd love to do that someday." I always thought it would be a bit further down the line, but when I heard that Cindy would not be running this year, I felt called to step up. I am comfortable in front of a crowd and love to create spaces where people feel like their voices can be heard. If elected, I look forward to working closely with Cindy to carry on this important work.

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Election 2026: Candidates' Statements

SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Paul Smith

3-year term

I am seeking to be elected to the 3-year Windham Southeast School District school board position, representing Dummerston. I have been a resident of Dummerston since 2003. My child has gone through the public school system here, first at Dummerston School and then at BUHS. I was employed in the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union for 33 years, first as a middle school science teacher in Guilford and subsequently as a Curriculum Coordinator in the Central Office. I continue to be employed by WSESU on a very part-time basis, which employment I would terminate if elected to the position.

Grace Cottage Hosts Annual Cabin Fever Online Auction

By Alysabeth Simon

Grace Cottage's Cabin Fever Online Auction is a perfect way to bring fun and joy to your winter. You'll find items that are practical, delectable, delightful, and inspirational! Bidding takes place from February 13-24.

Each year, Grace Cottage Family Health and Hospital's Cabin Fever Online Auction includes exotic vacations, Vermont foods, local gift certificates, handcrafted items, jewelry, art, and more. Generous local businesses and individuals donate this fantastic array of items. With a wide variety of offerings, there's something for everyone, whatever your interests or budget.

Have a gift certificate you know you will never use? Support Grace Cottage Family Health and Hospital by donating gift cards to the Cabin Fever Online Auction. This year, all proceeds go toward the construction of our new primary care clinic building.

You can visit the auction website now to register, browse the selection, and plan your bidding. Visit 32auctions.com/GraceCottage2026 to register so you can hit the ground bidding on Valentine's Day weekend!

For more information, visit the website gracecottage.org/auction or e-mail info@gracecottage.org.

I believe that my extensive experience with the school system puts me in a favorable position to be of service. I am thoroughly committed to maintaining the excellence that is exhibited by our schools, and to ongoing school improvement. I am also committed to effective community governance. Boards, such as the WSESU board, play a critical role in serving the interests of community by providing oversight, support, and advocacy for the students and families that the system serves. While I feel that my deep familiarity with the operation of the school district will help in this endeavor, I do not believe that it is the role of the board to direct how the system is operated. I am firmly in the camp of those who see the role of the school board as "making sure that the schools are well run, but not trying to run them." I am hopeful that I will be allowed to pursue that "new to me" role.

TREASURER

Chris Brown

1-year term

I will be running as a candidate for Town Treasurer for a third term. And it will also be my final term for office. It's been interesting, educational, frustrating and at times amusing. But in the end, ultimately rewarding. I've enjoyed working with all my fellow municipal colleagues, but after next year I will be approaching my mid-seventies and I'd like some free time for some traveling while I still able. I will very much miss working at the Town Office and for the residents of Dummerston. So if anyone is interested in perhaps running for election next year, stop by and I can answer questions you might have.



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SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Daniel Everlith

3-year term

I'm a parent and a family therapist, and for years I've been working alongside kids and adults to help manage the many challenges that we face in the home, at school, and in the community. I've seen time and again how systemic issues are the cause of or greatly contribute to these challenges, and I've spent my time helping families navigate through and beyond. This opportunity matters to me because it's a chance to support families in my community and help create lasting change for all.

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Dummerston Readers Provide Many Reasons

by Linda Rood

This group of Dummerston readers sent me their choices for their favorite books read in 2025, and this list is the result. I hope you find some good ideas for your own reading pleasure in this new year. As usual, there is a great variety.

From Marcy Hermansader: three inspiring biographies:

Birding to Change the World by Trish O’Kane (2025). This book is more about efforts to change the world, with birding as a means to an end.

Patriot, A Memoir by Alexi Navalny (2024). A true profile in courage, written with verve and wit.

Agent Zo by Clare Mulley (2024). The story of the only woman to join the Polish elite Special Forces during World War II and play a leading role in the liberation of her country.

From Suzanne Weinberg:

Stone Yard Devotional by Charlotte Wood (2023). A novel that reads like a memoir, set in Australia early in the pandemic. A woman leaves her career in conservation and retreats to a rural convent. Suzanne loved “the personal story within the eye-opening context of an invasive mouse plague (which really happened). Filled with paradoxes.”

Orbital by Samantha Harvey (2023). 2024

Booker Prize winner. Describes twenty-four hours on an international space station. “A mix of fascinating perspectives, interesting science, and excellent writing.”

Small Things Like These by Claire Keegan (2021). Short, perfect Irish novel. Suzanne’s favorite book of the year. (Author’s note: One of my favorites, too!)

Power by Linda Hogan (1998). Novel about the coming of age of a girl who experiences her native tribe’s and adjacent white culture’s views of justice, spirituality, and community.

The Woman Who Watches Over the World by Linda Hogan (2001). Memoir by the woman who wrote *Power*, a chronicle about health, identity, and culture.

From John Warren:

March by Geraldine Brooks (2005). Pulitzer Prize winner. A novel about the father of the March family of *Little Women*, gone to fight in the Civil War. It tells of the cost of whole-hearted devotion to a (thoroughly worthy) cause.

Super Volcanoes by Robin Norton (2002). “A SUPER book!” A tour of the geology of the rocky bodies in our solar system, with chapters on Earth, our Moon, Venus, Mars, and a satellite of Jupiter. A reference book as well as a great read!

From Jim Bombicino:

Three sequels to *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* series, written by David Lagercrantz after the original author’s death. They are: *The Girl in the Spider’s Web* (2015), *The Girl Who Takes an Eye for an Eye* (2017), and *The Girl Who Lived Twice* (2019). Hacker Lisbeth Sander and journalist Mikael Blomkvist explore corruption and crime in Sweden.

The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon (2023). A riveting historical mystery based on the (real) life of Martha Ballard, a Maine midwife who discovered a shocking murder. It brings you back to that time and place, true to what women were faced with in those times.

The Lost Bookshop by Evie Woods (2023). This best seller will appeal to fans of both historical fiction and fantasy. It tells of a magical, vanishing bookshop in Dublin that

connects three strangers.

Heartwood by Amity Gaige (2025). Jim’s favorite book of the year. This thriller tells the story of a young woman hiker who goes missing off the Appalachian Trail and the search and rescue team who are racing to find her. A page turner.

From Debbie Baker:

Buckeye by Patrick Ryan (2025). A sweeping multi-generational historical novel set in Ohio, following two families throughout the 20th century, and the impact of WWII on their lives. Best seller.

From Barbara Evans:

The Bill Slider Mysteries by Cynthia Harrod-Eagles. This is a long-running series about the Criminal Investigation Department of the London-area Shepherd’s Bush Police Department (not Scotland Yard) in which Slider and his partner solve complex murders. Full of hilarious puns (including the chapter heads), general humor, and the braininess of the main characters, “A complex and fun series.” The first book in the series is *Orchestrated Death* (1991)

Barbara also enjoys the mysteries of Rhys Bowen, Ann Cleves, and Louise Penney.

From Lou Nelsen, two classics:

East of Eden by John Steinbeck (1952). An epic novel that reimagines the biblical story of Cain and Abel through the intertwined lives of two families in the Salinas Valley of California. Considered Steinbeck’s masterpiece. “Well worth reading again or for the first time.”

Far From the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy (1874). Hardy’s first major success: the story of independent farmer, the beautiful Bathsheba Everdene, and her three suitors. Bathsheba is a fascinating, complex woman.

From Cami Eliot:

Time of the Child by Niall Williams (2024). The story of what happened in the fictional Irish village of Faha in 1962 when an abandoned newborn is found in the churchyard during the Christmas Fair. Beautiful writing, rich characters. Somewhat of a sequel to *This is Happiness*. (Author’s note: Also one of my favorites of the year.)

The Glassmaker by Tracy Chevalier (2024). A historical saga following Orsola Rossi, the dynamic daughter of a glass-making family in Murano, Venice. Despite it being a male-dominated trade, Orsola secretly learns to make beads and ends up supporting her family. The story “skips like

Wild Sprays and Chaos

By John Anderson

As if piling up
between two elemental forces,
successive waves of
passerines
roll in, roll in
to my feeders
building up, building
up, cresting
and then -
in a heartbeat - breaking
on the cold hard
rock of fear.
Breaking off into wild
sprays and chaos
and noise,
like ocean waves bursting
against the hard
cold coast of Maine.

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For Picking Up a Book!

a stone” from the Renaissance to the present.

The Lion Women of Tehran by Marian Kamali (2025). Set in Tehran in 1950 to 1979, the story of two girls from very different backgrounds who meet in grade school and become best friends. This friendship endures through social pressures, political upheaval, and difficult choices.

The Women on Platform Two by Laura Anthony (2025). Historical fiction based on the “Contraceptive Train” where women traveled to Belfast to buy contraceptives, which were illegal in the Republic of Ireland. This story is told through the friendship of Maura and Bernie, two very courageous and

devoted women.

The Nature of Fragile Things by Susan Meissner (2021). Against the backdrop of the San Francisco earthquake and fire, a mail order bride finds her way out of a marriage to a con man, while forming bonds with two other women also caught in his web. Great characters, themes of friendship, determination, and survival.

The Correspondent by Virginia Evans (2025). Written in the form of letters to a variety of people. The reader begins to understand the life of 70-year-old Sybil Van Antwerp, as well as her loves, her career, her regrets, her difficult family relations, her

guilt and her fierce opinions, and how we can change if we are willing to open our hearts.

To this wonderful list, I would add **An Unfinished Love Story** by Doris Kearns Goodwin, **Playground** by Richard Powers, **The History of Sound** by Ben Shattuck, and **Heart the Lover** by Lily King. Roger and I both read local author Deborah Luskin’s new book, **Reviving Artemis**, a memoir about how she became a deer hunter, and we found it very interesting and informative. Thanks to all who contributed this year with these great suggestions. I only wonder how I will ever be able to read all the books I want to read!

Department Structure Has Many Moving Parts

continued from page 3

answer is that our current call volume of roughly 25 calls per month means that some days we do not have any calls, and others we have multiple (including multiple concurrent calls!). That unplannable, sporadic demand makes it prohibitively difficult to schedule shifts in a way that is respectful of the fact that our members all have jobs, families, and personal lives to tend to.

All members carry radio pagers that trigger an alarm and then play dispatching messages when our service is requested. Additionally, we utilize an app made for first responders that allows individuals to sign on as responding. This app allows us to quickly communicate to each other (and directly to our dispatch center in Keene) and by the time a member has arrived at their home station, a display monitor shows a summary of who is responding and shows their current location via GPS monitoring on their phone. We use this information to make decisions about whether to wait for one more member who is close and enroute, or whether to depart.

Availability: What if no one is available? Being short of manpower is often a difficult reality in a department staffed by working-age volunteers who have other professional obligations. To combat this inherent thin spot in our organization, we deploy active communication among department leadership to communicate planned

travel out of town and manage other contingencies. We work with our mutual aid departments and plan training and events with this issue in mind. Nonetheless, we are sometimes forced to respond with fewer members than are ideal.

Recruiting new members (and retaining well qualified existing members!) is another primary strategy for ensuring we have the manpower to meet the moment. Shifting the burden of fundraising or organizing from members who are first responders to auxiliary members can help reduce burnout and aid retention. Managing this strategy actively takes continuous effort.

Another factor, unfair as it may be, is that the department relies heavily on the small number of members whose job keeps them in town and/or who have the flexibility to drop what they are doing to respond. Does your job allow you to walk out in an unplanned hurry, multiple times per week? You might make a great volunteer

fire fighter!

Thank You: The department would like to thank the Dummerston Historical Society for the wonderful job they did assembling our department’s history into a great exhibition that ran throughout the end of last year. As members, we enjoyed digging through our archives, hearing stories we hadn’t heard, and meeting all sorts of folks with connections to our community. Additionally, the department would like to thank the many people who recently made direct contributions to our organization’s year-end capital fund drive. Your donations and generosity are greatly appreciated, and we will ensure each dollar’s prudent use.

If you have questions about the fire service or would like to learn more about our organization, we’d encourage you to drop by one of our stations on a Tuesday evening to say hello. We welcome visitors.

Dummerston Notable Events

FEBRUARY

- 20 Dummerston Property Taxes due**
Town Office, 5 p.m. *Note that postmarks do not qualify as submission dates*

MARCH


- 3 Town meeting**
Elementary School, 10 a.m.
Town elections
Elementary School, 8 a.m.–7 p.m.
Dummerston School Friends of the Library Book Adoption
School library, 9:30 a.m. until end of town meeting

APRIL

- 1 Vermont town registration deadline for dog licenses**
Town Office
15 Income tax due date
File Vermont Homestead Declaration (HS-122)
online at <http://www.state.vt.us/tax/index.shtml>

MAY

- 2 Vermont Green Up Day**
For information, visit website <https://greenupvermont.org/>
16 Annual Geranium Festival and Book Sale
Lydia Taft Pratt Library and Community Center, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.



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USEFUL STUFF TO KNOW

Smoke Alarms & Carbon Monoxide Detectors: Dummerston Cares and WDVFD are providing and installing **free** smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Call the DC Message Line at (802) 257-5800 and leave your name and phone number for callback.

Senior Lunches Evening Star Grange; Second & fourth Wednesday, noon. **Suggested donations:** in-house meals \$4 for age 60 and up; \$5 for age 59 and under. Take-out \$5 regardless of age. For Take-out call: 802-254-1138. Leave name, phone number, number of meals desired, whether Eat-in or Take-out.

The Front Porch Forum: online at www.frontporchforum.com

Heating assistance: Fuel options listed on Dummerston Cares website. For assistance, call Cares Message Line at (802) 257-5800. Leave name and phone number to receive a callback.

NAMES & TIMES & NUMBERS

Community Center Randy Hickin 802-257-0784
Conservation Commission

Web site: www.dummerstonconservation.com

Dummerston Cares Message line & Fuel Assistance
802-257-5800, email: info@dummerstoncares.org,
web site: www.dummerstoncares.org

Dummerston School 802-254-2733
Web site: dummerston.wsesu.org

Fire Chief Larry Pratt, 802-579-9494

Fire Warden Ted Glabach, 802-384-6994

Deputy Fire Warden Allen Pike, 802-258-0100

Lydia Taft Pratt Library 802-258-9878

Hours: Mon. & Wed. 10–2:30; Tue. & Thu. 1–7;
Sat. 10–2

Web site: library.dummerston.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dummerstonlibrary

email: dummerstonvlibrary@gmail.com

Vermont Theatre Company 802-258-1344
Evening Star Grange

Larry or Carol Lynch, 802-310-0799

Meals on Wheels Cynthia Fisher, 802-257-1236

Selectboard selectboard@dummerston.org

Senior Solutions Carol Lynch, 802-254-2517

Springfield Office 800-642-5119

Town Garage Lee Chamberlin, 802-254-2411

Town Office Laurie Frechette, 802-257-1496

email: townclerk@dummerston.org

Veterans Assistance Contact Dummerston Cares
message line or email

Views of Dummerston

views@viewsofdummerston.org

WSESU 802-254-3730

Websites: Official Town: www.dummerston.org

Calendar: calendar.dummerston.org

Local Interest: www.dummerston.com

Dummerston Meetings

Please note that these meetings may not be taking place at their usual locations. Please refer to the town web site, www.Dummerston.org, for updated information.

Town Meetings

Selectboard 6 p.m.

Every other Wednesday

Planning Commission 6:30 p.m.

2nd Monday

Conservation Commission 6 p.m.

2nd Thursday

Energy Committee 5 p.m.

1st Monday

Development Review Board 6 p.m.

3rd Tuesday at the town office

Community Center 7 p.m.

1st Monday at the Community Center

PTFO 6 p.m.

3rd Thurs. at the Dummerston School Library

WSED 6 p.m.

2nd & 4th Tuesdays, revolving locations

Historical Society

QUARTERLY MEETINGS: 3rd week of Jan./April/July/Oct.

OPEN HOUSE: 1st & 3rd Sundays 1–3 p.m.

Meetings at Historical Society; See additional meetings at DummerstonHistoricalSociety.org

Lydia's Friends 5 p.m.

2nd Thursday, Lydia Taft Pratt Library