

PITTSFIELD POST

A FREE WEEKLY PRODUCTION BY COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

"February is the border between winter and spring." - Terri Guillemets

February 3, 2021

Henry, the Snowy Owl

Have you ever driven by George and Mary Gray's house on High Street and seen the stone sculptures on their property? Those sculptures are the product of their son, Joe. He has created some amazing sculptures over the years, and many of them are carved in that yard.

Joe is a well-known stone sculptor throughout New England and beyond. His work has been highlighted at many venues including the Boston Flower and Garden Show and the Newport Flower Show. His specialties include large outdoor sculptures, both abstract and realistic, stone fountains, garden sculpture, interior artwork, memorials for loved ones, and beautifully carved keystones. His sculptures often reflect his love of the natural world and his passion and connection to Native American art and sculpture. His attention to detail and belief that sculpture can evolve into a form that is often unexpected make his work both artistic and authentic.



Joe recently decided to use his skill to pay it forward. His sculptures of Henry, the Snowy Owl, are being crafted to sell, with the proceeds going to local food pantries. The food pantry here in Pittsfield was the first recipient of a donation of \$1000. So far two of these owls have been crafted and sold.

Thank you, Joe, for sharing your craft with us, and for your amazingly generous gift back to local communities. *Mary Ellen Plante*

School Funding Inequity is Rapidly Rising by Kathy Hubert, Newport, NH

The author has given permission to share this article. Information provided gives context for the proposed 2021-2022 Pittsfield School District Budget.

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested institutions across New Hampshire in ways we never would have imagined a year ago, none more so than our public schools.

Students, families, educators, and administrators have had to adapt to constantly changing circumstances and to institute new ways of learning, often with little time and fewer resources. As a Granite State native, a longtime member of the local business community, and the parent of seven public school graduates, I know firsthand the importance of a quality education and am proud of the resilience and dedication our schools and schoolchildren have shown.

Because of that background, I am also, unfortunately, far too familiar with the painful and painfully frequent spending cuts and property tax hikes that have been synonymous with our public school system for decades now. I am deeply concerned that we are about to let that history repeat itself yet again.

Due to the pandemic and changes in law, public schools across the state face a possible loss of \$90 million in state education aid in the coming year. In my hometown of Newport, the loss is expected to be about \$1.2 million. As a result, we could see a local school property tax rate increase of roughly \$3 per \$1,000 – or almost \$600 for a family with a home worth \$200,000. Such an increase could come even though many communities across the state have already cut school spending to the bone.

Sadly, this story is by no means unique. The drop in state aid will likely be felt by families, not just in Newport, Claremont, or Charlestown, but in every corner of the state and could force more than 20 cities (go to page 3)

Town Crier

Andi Riel, 435-6346

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Wednesday, February 3, 7pm Pittsfield School District Deliberative Session at Pittsfield Middle High School Gym. Social distancing guidelines will be followed, and please wear a face mask. The snow date is Thursday, February 4.

Saturday, February 6, 8:30-2:30pm Ice Fishing at Graylag Nature Preserve (weather permitting - backup date of Sat., Feb. 20) for a hands-on introduction to ice fishing! This workshop will cover tip ups and other ice fishing equipment, ice safety, rules and regulations, and fish identification. Part of NH Fish and Game's "Let's Go Fishing" program, this workshop will give you a chance to give ice fishing a try – you do not need to have a fishing license or any equipment to participate. Led by Stu Stinchfield, longtime friend of Graylag and the stone mason responsible for much of our land art, this will be an in-person socially-distant event. graylag.org/programs/ice-fishing or call 435-5555, email info@graylag.com

PMHS Winter Athletic Season - All home games are streamed live on Facebook. @pmhsathletics. The gym does not allow us the capability of allowing fans for home games due to COVID-19 regulations. We hope you will watch the games on Facebook. We appreciate the support! GO PANTHERS!!

Josiah Carpenter Library - The library can come to you! Do you find it hard to visit the library? Library employees will deliver materials to your home. Call 435-8406 or email lvogt@pittsfieldnh.gov to learn more and schedule a delivery.

The Pittsfield Alumni Association has decided to postpone the PHS ALL CLASS REUNION until the Summer of 2022. We are saddened to make this announcement, but we are hopeful that we will be able to have a huge, wonderful gathering in 2022. We will keep you updated!

Pittsfield Historical Society continues to raise funds for the new Museum and Headquarters. The "BUY-A-BRICK" project for the garden patio is an opportunity for people to buy a brick to honor yourself, loved ones past or present, or whomever you wish to remember. The bricks are \$100 each and may be engraved with 3 lines of 18 characters each for a 4"x8" brick. Please visit www.pittsfieldhistory.com for a donation form and instructions. For more information, please call 798-3984.

Thursday, February 25, 11am - Noon Senior Center Community Lunch and Meals-2-Go Curbside Pickup. If you are over 60 this service is available for you. Please call the center at 435-8432 if interested, and we will meet you outside with your meal.

Wednesday, February 17, 11am The Pittsfield Senior Center is starting virtual programs. We will be having a discussion over Zoom. This is the time to talk and give suggestions on what virtual programs you would like to see. We will also discuss what onsite programs you would like at the center, when we do reopen. Space is limited, call 435-8482 if interested.

Happy Birthday wishes to Maureen VanHorn yesterday and to Reny Boyd on Thursday. I hope you two **LOVELY** ladies enjoy your special day!

To my constituents in Pittsfield,

This week, I started committee work for the coming year. My committee has 53 bills, and due to the social distancing that the Speaker is requiring for hearings, we will be working on a Monday through Friday schedule. All hearings will require the public to testify remotely, and representatives will have that option as well. Those of us in the building will be spaced out and masked unless alone.

I'll be holding hearings Mondays and Wednesdays, and expect very long days. We start with eight bills on the state pension system, three of which passed the House last year but died in the Senate: death benefits for public works employees, death benefits for first responders who die by suicide, and requiring the retirement system to report investment fees.

Anyone wanting more information can email me for my weekly newsletter, which has all the details. *Representative Carol McGuire*, carol@mcguire4house.com 782-4918

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Please support the **Pittsfield Post**. Checks may be made out to Pittsfield Center Development Corporation, P.O. Box 253, Pittsfield, NH 03263. Donations are tax-deductible. Donations above \$50.00 may be acknowledged as Sponsor of the Week. Go to www.pittsfieldpost.org to download a donation form.

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Double Word Puzzle #20

by Diana Westgate

Find the word that satisfies both definitions.

1. Sports competition _____
Hunted animals
2. Liquid receptacle _____
Transparent material
3. School evaluation _____
Measure of incline
4. Final resting place _____ Serious
5. Minced fine _____ Earth
6. Yuck _____ Type of weight
7. Remove the innards _____
Easy course
8. Difficult _____ Solid
9. Nun's uniform _____
Habitual activity
10. Type of meat _____
Exaggerated acting

(Answers on p. 4)

School Funding continued: and towns to raise local property taxes by \$2 per \$1,000 or more in the months ahead. Of course, if you've followed this issue closely, as I have, it will come as little surprise that most of the communities who face the steepest potential hikes are those already forced to rely on sky-high property tax rates to ensure their children receive the education they need to succeed and to thrive. For instance, since it stands to lose more than \$700,000 in education aid and since its assessed property value is so far below the state average on a per pupil basis, Allenstown would need to resort to a local property tax increase of more than \$2.30 per \$1,000 to make up the difference.

The pandemic has been kind to no one. Families and businesses across the state are making tough choices, as they struggle with fewer hours and smaller paychecks or fewer customers and declining receipts. A further increase in property taxes, even if they were to go to something as vital as education, could prove devastating to households' budgets and companies' bottom lines.

Consequently, preventing these kinds of property tax increases must be among Gov. Sununu's and the Legislature's top priorities in the coming weeks. The surest way to do that is to bolster state education aid, preserving New Hampshire's recent progress in providing additional assistance to those communities where it is needed most and insulating school finances from the impact of the pandemic. Efforts to reduce business taxes or to drain funds away from public schools via a dramatic expansion of vouchers – two ideas that seem to fixate the governor and his legislative allies at present – would only add to these difficulties. They would turn the stream of funds flowing away from local schools into a torrent and leave local property taxpayers high and dry.

A report conducted for the recent Commission to Study School Funding summed up the problem we face clearly and succinctly. It found that New Hampshire's school funding system is "inequitable from both student and taxpayer perspectives" and that the "districts serving the highest proportion of students who are economically disadvantaged spend less, on average, compared with districts serving the fewest such students," while those "districts with the least property wealth per student impose the highest local education tax rates to be able to fund their children's education."

To ensure quality schools and affordable property tax bills for everyone in New Hampshire, it's long past time for our elected officials to find a fair and sustainable solution to this problem. The first step is to keep it from getting worse and to stop yet another round of state-induced local property tax increases. *(Kathy Hubert, a lifelong Granite Stater and longtime resident of Newport, is one of the former owners of Hubert's Department Stores. Among her civic and community endeavors, she is a member of the board of directors of the N.H. School Funding Fairness Project.)*



Cook's Corner

Chunky Cheeseburger Soup

Cheeseburgers and soup, our two favorite "food groups," right? Well now you don't have to make a tough decision; you can enjoy both in one pot of deliciousness! Inspired by one of our precious grandsons, Jack, I've also made this without the potatoes (and reduced the broth to 4 cups), but I topped the soup before serving with

the cooked Tater Tots, which always brings big smiles and squeals of delight. Whichever way you go, I hope this one brings smiles to your table. Bon appetit!

- 2 lbs lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 5 cups beef broth (low sodium)
- 4 cups peeled, diced potatoes (about 1&1/2 inch dice)
- 4 Tbsp butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1&1/2 cups milk
- 1 (6 oz) can tomato paste
- 2 Tbsp ketchup
- 2 Tbsp mustard (yellow, Dijon or your favorite)
- 2 (generous) cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 Tbsp chopped, fresh parsley
- Chopped tomatoes, onion and / or pickles for serving
- 1 pkg hamburger buns, sliced into "sticks"
- Cooking spray

Cook the beef in a large pot, crumbling with a spoon until no longer pink. Add celery and onion, cook stirring until the vegetables are softened, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add broth and potatoes. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally until the potatoes are tender, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt the butter in a medium saucepan. Whisk in the flour and then slowly add the milk, whisking constantly and cook over low until thickened, about 2 minutes. Whisk in tomato paste, ketchup and mustard.

Slowly whisk the milk mixture into the soup and return to a light boil. Reduce heat to simmer, add the Cheddar cheese a handful at a time and cook, stirring constantly, until the cheese is melted. Remove from heat.

Cut the hamburger buns into "sticks." Spray them very lightly with cooking spray and toast in a 350 degree oven until the bread sticks are toasted. Serve the soup topped with chopped tomatoes, onion and / or pickles, with the hamburger bun bread sticks on the side. - MP Christakos



Express your Opinion!

Do you have questions or opinions you would like to share? Are you a candidate for an elected position in Pittsfield? Share your ideas or candidacy in the *Post*.

Submission Guidelines: Identify yourself and provide contact information.

300 words or less; exceptional information may exceed the word limit at the discretion of the *Post* Content Team.

Topics may include events, issues, and opportunities about or affecting Pittsfield.

Please be civil, factual, specific, and clear. No submission is guaranteed publication.

Deadline is noon on Friday via pittsfieldnews@pnhcc.org. We look forward to supporting an informed Pittsfield election season, *The Post* Volunteers



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Answers to Double Word Puzzle #20

1. Sports competition – **game** – Hunted animals
2. Liquid receptacle – **glass** – Transparent material
3. School evaluation – **grade** – Measure of incline
4. Final resting place – **grave** – Serious
5. Minced fine – **ground** – Earth
6. Yuck – **gross** – Type of weight
7. Remove the innards – **gut** – Easy course
8. Difficult – **hard** – Solid
9. Nun's uniform – **habit** – Habitual activity
10. Type of meat – **ham** – Exaggerated acting