



# BARRE TOWN MUNICIPAL NEWSLETTER

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## COVID Update

Through the rise and projected fall of the omicron variant, town services continue as always. Town offices continue to be open to the public; masks are required. Those needing vault time in the Clerk's Office are strongly encouraged to make appointments by calling (802) 479-9391. All meetings of town boards, commissions, and committees are also open to the public, although participating by phone or video is recommended. Participation information for each meeting can be found at [https://www.barretown.org/boards\\_and\\_commissions](https://www.barretown.org/boards_and_commissions), or you may call (802) 479-9331 for that information.

Speaking of meetings, the large conference room at the town offices, used by the Selectboard, Development Review Board, and Board of Civil Authority/Abatement, is receiving an audio-visual system upgrade. This upgrade will improve hybrid meetings, where some people are at the town offices and others are participating remotely. Assuming no issues with the equipment or internet service of remote participants, their audio experience will greatly improve, and it will be easier for onsite and remote participants to engage with each other by video. The new system will also make it easier for onsite participants to hear each other. The system is projected to be fully online in February; pandemic-related supply chain issues has delayed the project.

Barre Town EMS has taken on additional work to help the region get through the pandemic. The Selectboard recently accepted a grant from the Vermont Department of Health for Barre Town EMS to maintain a roster of EMS providers that can take part in COVID testing and offering vaccinations through calendar year 2022. The grant is for up to \$300,000 for staff time and associated expenses. No match from the town is required. *(Continued on Page 2)*



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## Use of CLFRF

On January 6 the United States Treasury (UST) issued its Final Rule on coronavirus local fiscal recovery funds (CLFRF). The 437 page rule is a game changer giving almost every Vermont municipality much more flexibility in using CLFRF and reducing reporting requirements. The Final Rule offers an option to elect a standard allowance for revenue loss. The standard allowance is up to the full amount of the town's CLFRF grant or \$10 million, whichever is less. Barre Town's CLFRF award is \$2,307,709. The Final rule was so surprising that during her pre-scheduled briefing to the Selectboard on January 18 Finance Director Katelyn Kran titled one slide "Wait, Really?"

The Rule allows towns to claim the standard allowance and use the money for "provision of government services." The Rule maintains some use restrictions. CLFRF cannot be used to: 1) offset a reduction in net tax revenues, 2) deposit money into pension funds, 3) pay off debt, 4) satisfy settlements and judgements, or 5) fund projects that conflict with the purpose of ARPA.

VLCT employs a new staff person whose sole responsibility is advising municipalities on use of CLFRF. When the Final Rule was issued VLCT advised its members to, "take a short pause on your ARPA work, decision-making and spending."

The UST's Final Rule Overview states, "Government services generally include any service traditionally provided by a government." "Government services is the most flexible use category and are subject to streamlined reporting and compliance requirement." The deadlines in the Interim Rule remain in effect. All money must be spent or obligated (under contract) by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.

In November the town manager gave the Selectboard a list of CLFRF use ideas to begin discussion. The Selectboard directed that public input be solicited. Thirteen suggestions were submitted and added to the list. The list included giving residents a last chance to obtain financial help, same as current state programs. In January the Selectboard directed those ideas be dropped because of the duplication. The Selectboard requested that while waiting on Final Rule details, *(Continued on Page 2)*



### Dates & Events:

- February 15 - Property & Sewer Taxes Due
- March 1 - Town Meeting Day
- March 4-6 - Annual Winter Softball Tournament
- March 19 - Rabies Clinic (Drive-Thru)
- April 1 - Dog Licenses Due
- April 1 - Winter Parking Ban Ends
- April 15 - Homestead Declaration Due
- May 10 - Barre Town Annual Elections

#### (Cont'd - Use of CLFRF)

more information on several ideas, including at least one public suggestion, be collected.

Adopting a CLFRF Use Plan is on hold until details are better understood. However, a few uses are being planned: 1) Selectboard meeting room digital audio-visual equipment, 2) town radio system upgrade, 3) DPW Yard stormwater project, 4) waterline crossing the Jail Branch on the new Rt. 110 bridge, and 5) replacing waterlines in Upper Webstersville side streets.

*By Carl Rogers, Town Manager*

### Churches Repurposed

After the St. Sylvester's Church in Graniteville, and the St Cecilia/St. Francis Cabrini Church in East Barre were closed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, both buildings stood vacant with uncertain futures. The buildings were offered for sale by the Diocese, but the question was, who might want these old buildings with mostly open interiors. The answers came to the Planning Commission with two separate permit requests in late 2021.



Lucas John approached the commission about moving his existing fitness center from Montpelier to the St. Sylvester's building. The open space offered by the former church was just what Mr. John needed to setup all his equipment and to have it on one floor was even better. Mr. John provides self-defense instruction and trains in mixed martial arts and other professional grappling. Mr. John also relocated his residence to the former rectory on the same site.

In December, the Planning Commission was approached by Jerri & Stephen Howard of Washington, about their interest in purchasing the St. Cecilia/St. Francis Cabrini building to move their maple products production business to town. The Howards have operated Maple Harvest Specialties for years out of their home, but this former church building offered an opportunity for them. The sale is still pending, but if everything goes according to plan, Mr. & Mrs. Howard soon should be making their maple goodness for retail and mail-order sales.

To many, me included, both former churches have generations of history that is important to us; it is sad to see things change. However, while they can't remain churches, it is important to make sure both building continue to be used and maintained. It is nice that both Mr. John and Mr. & Mrs. Howard have committed to keeping the outside character of both former churches the same.

*By Chris Violette, Planning and Zoning Director*

### ARPA

**Homeowners:** The Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) is now accepting applications from Vermont homeowners who are behind on their housing expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funded through the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, the Vermont Homeowner Assistance Program provides grants to eligible Vermont homeowners who missed payments on their mortgage, utilities, (including water/sewer, electricity, and home heating), as well as property taxes, and homeowner's or condominium association fees. The program is restricted to expenses related to a homeowner's primary home. Other eligibility criteria also apply. If applicants are approved, payments will be made directly to service providers. To learn more and apply, visit [vermonthap.vhfa.org](http://vermonthap.vhfa.org) or call (833) 221-4208.

**Renters:** The Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) was created to help renters dealing with financial challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For eligible households, the program offers rental and utility assistance to help Vermonters avoid eviction or loss of utility service. Find out more at <https://erap.vsha.org>.

**Businesses:** Properties with three or more acres of impervious surface that have never had an operational stormwater permit or that were permitted to standards in place prior to the 2002 Stormwater Management Manual are subject to state General Permit 3-9050. Affected properties should receive notice from the state Stormwater Program identifying when General Permit applications are due. These applications must be prepared by a licensed professional engineer. The Agency of Natural Resources anticipates grant funding and subsidized loans will be available to support engineering, design, and implementation costs associated with this General Permit. The Agency is currently developing a funding plan and will release it in the near future. (Source: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/stormwater/9050/3-acre-assistance>).

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*

### Town Employee Changes

We were pleased to fill the DPW vacancy with **Brendon Perkins** in January. Brendon previously worked at Northeast Materials Group right here in town, where he drove their very large haul trucks and operated a front-end loader. He also has considerable tree cutting experience that will be put to good use to protect the traveling public. DPW employees spend a good amount of time each year removing dead or dying trees, ash trees that will eventually become a hazard because of the invasive pest Emerald Ash Borer, and roadside brush that make it hard to see around curves. If you see a new face in a town plow truck, give a wave!

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*

#### (Cont'd—COVID Update)

BTEMS offers a vaccine clinic at its McLaughlin Road/Rt. 302 station every Monday and Thursday from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. The Moderna and Pfizer 1st, 2nd and booster shots and J&J 1st and 2nd shots are given. BTEMS also continues to co-manage the vaccine clinic in the Berlin Mall. That clinic is open Monday-Saturday, 8:00am to 6:00pm. First, second and booster shots from all three manufacturers are available. Service is for ages 5 and up. A walk-in testing clinic is held in the Berlin Mall every day. Hours vary. Call BTEMS at (802) 476-3147 for more details about any of these services.

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*



The next election will be held on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Barre Town Middle and Elementary School gymnasium. This annual election is known state-wide as

Town Meeting Day. In Barre Town we will be voting for school issues only, as Barre Town Municipal/Town elections are held in May per Town Charter. This year there will be two separate ballots: one for the Barre Unified Union School District elections and another for the Central Vermont Career Center elections.

Due to the continuing effects of COVID-19 on our state, once again the Vermont Legislature has signed emergency legislation governing how Town Meetings can be held. Barre Unified Union School District will be voting on all issues by Australian ballot. This means there will be no traditional from the floor election the night before Australian Ballot voting and all questions have been placed on the ballot.

#### **What's on the Ballots?**

On March 1, 2022 voters will be asked to elect a Barre Unified Union School District Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer for a one-year term, elect School Directors, vote on a proposed budget, and borrowing of funds. Voters of the Barre Unified Union School district will also be voting to decide if the Central Vermont Career Center will officially become its own district as described in the Governance Planning Committee Report that was approved by the State Board of Education.

For more information on the articles and to view a copy of the warning and sample ballots when available visit [www.barretown.org](http://www.barretown.org).

The emergency election for law legislation also modified procedures around petitions. The law contained a provision which eliminated the need for candidates running for local office to collect signatures. Candidates for school board and other offices simply needed to file a Consent of Candidate form on or before the deadline of January 24.

Printed school budget books will be available at a number of local businesses throughout the Town and City that allow in-person traffic. Residents can expect to receive a brochure from the Barre Unified Union School district mailed to them as well.

Barre Town is encouraging residents to vote absentee during this year's elections. Please submit your request as soon as possible. If you are voting early the ballot must be received by the close of the polls on Election Day. Ballot returns can be mailed or deposited into one of the drop boxes located at the Municipal Building, 149 Websterville Road.

#### **How do I request an early or absentee ballot?**

***You must request ballots every calendar year!*** There are multiple options to request an absentee ballot:

- Call the Clerk's Office at (802) 479-9391
- Email [wmoore@barretown.org](mailto:wmoore@barretown.org) or [tlunt@barretown.org](mailto:tlunt@barretown.org)
- Use the My Voter Page portal at <https://mvp.vermont.gov/>

#### **How to register to vote?**

There is no deadline to register to vote. You will be able to register to vote on the day of the election. You can register prior by visiting the Town Clerk's Office or going online to: <https://olvr.vermont.gov>.

For more information regarding elections, visit the Barre Town

website and go to the Town Clerk page and click Election Information.

*By Tina Lunt, Town Clerk*

### **Nomination Papers and Petitions** **for Town Elections**

Thinking about serving your community? If you wish to run for office, you must submit a Consent of Candidate Form with the Town Clerk's office by Monday, April 4, 2022 for Barre Town's Municipal Annual Election of Officers (Town Meeting) on May 10, 2022.

As of January 19, 2022, the Vermont Legislature signed emergency election legislation governing how Town meetings can be held. The law eliminated the need for candidates running for office to collect signatures, however candidates must submit a Consent of Candidate form on or before the deadline of April 4, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.

#### **How do I locate a Consent of Candidate Form?**

- Visit the Barre Town website at [www.barretown.org](http://www.barretown.org) – the form is located on the Town Clerk page, under Election Information
- Visit the Town Clerk's Office
- Call the Town Clerk's Office at (802) 479-9391 or email [tlunt@barretown.org](mailto:tlunt@barretown.org)
- VT Secretary of State's website at <http://www.sec.state.vt.us>

Voters will elect town officers: 2 Selectboard members, moderator, constable, and an auditor. The General Fund and Highway Fund budget also will be on the ballot.

**Town Caucus:** The Barre Town Non-Partisan Caucus is tentatively scheduled for Monday, March 14, 2022. A caucus is a meeting of the members of a political party who get together to nominate a candidate for an elected office (Selectboard, Moderator, Town Clerk, etc.). Non-Partisan means that the political parties hold their meetings together, not separately. Traditionally, Barre Town holds a Town Caucus meeting to ensure there is a least one candidate for each municipal office. All Town voters are invited to attend.

*By Tina Lunt, Town Clerk*

When completed the Town budget book will hold ten fund budgets and nine appendices. Last fall staff prepared updates to four 5-year plans. After approval by the Selectboard the plans are appendices in the budget book. As budget work started in December, work on the five other appendices was undertaken.



The November Town newsletter and Front Porch Forum announcements solicited applications to serve on the Budget Committee. This year a record number (12) residents submitted a letter of interest. In early January, the Selectboard appointed Phil Cecchini and Alan Garceau to the Committee; both have prior Budget Committee experience. Town Clerk Tina Lunt appointed Mike Gilbar. Those three selected Chris Neddo and Tony Amaral to complete the Committee of five citizens and five Selectboard members.

The Committee's first meeting was on January 25. It will meet every Tuesday night at least until March 22. Extra meetings will be held (after public notice) as needed. Meetings are in the Municipal Building from 6:00 am to 7:50 pm.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

**(Cont'd - A Look at the Budget)**

Agendas are posted with Selectboard meeting agendas at Hannaford, Trow Hill Grocery, Graniteville General Store, and the Municipal Building. Agendas, minutes, and budget summary pages are posted on the town website. The Budget Committee has its own subpage under Boards and Commissions (for agendas and minutes). Look for summary pages by clicking on the Publications and Budget link.

Residents are welcome to attend meetings in person or remotely. Telephone connection information is listed on every agenda. To attend via Teams, contact Elaine in the Town Manager's Office at (802) 479-9331.

As of this writing the Building, Cemetery, Equipment, Water, Sewer and Sewer Capital Improvement Fund budgets are completed. Town departments that "own" a building will contribute 3% more to the Building Fund, which pays for more expensive building repairs and improvements. The Cemetery Fund is requesting a large increase in tax subsidy because a temporary assistant sexton (department head) position is proposed to help with succession planning. Town departments will pay the usual 4% more into the Equipment Fund budget. The manager's proposed water rates include a \$2 per quarter increase in the base charge and a 2% increase in the water consumption charge. The Sewer Fund would be supported by a \$20 per year (6%) increase in the user fee.

At the end of March, the Committee will vote to set the amount of all ten budgets. The General and Highway Fund budgets are listed on the May Town Meeting ballot for voter approval. An article in the April newsletter and a detailed budget booklet (available on paper and digitally) will offer information about the budgets, especially the General and Highway Funds, before the election.

Questions about the budgets may be directed to the town manager.

*By Carl Rogers, Town Manager*

**2022 Dog License Renewal & Rabies Clinic**

By Vermont law, by April 1 all dogs six months of age or older must be licensed annually through the Town Clerk's Office in the town that the animal resides.

**How to obtain a dog license:**

To license your dog, you must present the following items to the Town Clerk's Office:

- Copy of a current rabies certificate
- Payment for the license: \$10.00 for a spayed or neutered dog and \$14.00 for a dog that is not fixed).

These prices are good until April 1, 2022. Unlicensed dogs (after April 1, 2022) will be charged a late fee plus the owner could be fined \$35.00.

**License by mail:**

If the Town Clerk's Office has a current rabies certificate on file for your pet, a license renewal form was mailed to you in early January. Please be sure to review the information carefully and make any necessary corrections. You will need to sign the license and enclose the payment and license renewal form in the return detachable self-addressed envelope. This can be mailed or simply dropped in one of the drop boxes located at the Municipal building. A dog license tag will be mailed to you upon receipt of required paperwork and correct fees.

If the rabies certificate on file has expired or will expire be-

fore April 1, 2022, you would have received a postcard reminder in January.

*By Tina Lunt, Town Clerk*

**Rabies Clinics**

The Barre Town Firefighters Association, in conjunction with the Town of Barre, will be conducting a **DRIVE-THRU Rabies Clinic** on March 19, 2022. This clinic offers an affordable option to protect your dog or cat from ill effects associated with the rabies virus. We have found that by offering this clinic as a drive-thru, it offers reduced person to person contact as well as allowing the dog or cat to stay in the comfort of your family vehicle which hopefully will mean less stress for all involved.

The clinic will be offered at a Barre Town Public Works facility at 79 Pitman Road in the Wilson Industrial Park from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The cost of the clinic remains just \$15.00 per vaccination. We ask that dogs be leashed, and cats be crated when your vehicle enters the building. *This clinic is open to residents of any town and while in the past the Town Clerk has offered Barre Town dog licensing, that is hard to do under this format so dog licensing will not be offered.* Please visit [barretown.org](http://barretown.org) for more information and to obtain an intake form that we ask to be filled out prior to arrival.

*By Chris Violette, Fire Chief*

**Emergency Management**

**Basement water can be dangerous** A common problem during winter months and rainy seasons can be water in your basement. It is very important to understand that water in your basement can have both health and safety concerns and dealing with it should be approached in a timely but cautious manner.



First, do not go into water in your basement until you know that **no electrical components of things like your furnace or hot water heater are in contact with water**. Also, make sure that nothing else electrical is in the water such as cords to electrical equipment, including extension cords. Standing water in the basement can be energized and electrocution can occur. The height of the water in the basement may make the difference between safe or not. A couple of inches might be okay, a foot could be a different story. When in doubt, contact an electrician or somebody else who can help you determine whether it is safe. A good common practice is to make sure any electrical devices or cords are not on the floor.

Once safe, the water needs to be removed immediately or damage can occur to your house or mold can form causing a host of other issues. If capable you should remove the water with pumps or wet vacs and use fans to dry the area. There are also professional services that can be hired to dry the basement. Always be cautious and when in doubt stay out and get help.

*By Chris Violette, Fire Chief*

**OFFICES OPEN**

*The Town Offices will be open and all departments will be working on March 1, Town Meeting Day.*

### Barre Town's K9 Team



In February of last year, Officer Leo de Prato and K9 Lakota successfully completed the Narcotics Detection Course at the Vermont Police Academy. After working the streets for a few short months, they went back to school in July, graduating in November after completing the Canine Patrol School. Combined these two certifications consisted of over 600 hours of training, not to mention the in-service trainings they attend monthly to keep their skills sharp. Officer de Prato and K9 Lakota are now fully certified to locate several different types of narcotics, locate evidence of a crime, find lost/missing people, and Lakota is trained to protect Officer de Prato should the need arise.

Since becoming certified, Officer de Prato and K9 Lakota have been called upon for 28 narcotics searches, perimeter control for 3 search warrants, 2 evidence searches, 3 missing people, and 7 public demonstrations. Their superior work has resulted in the seizure of numerous narcotics, over \$5,000 in cash, and over 12 arrests.

*By Bill Dodge, Chief of Police*

### Summer Jobs

The town seeks to fill several seasonal, full-time positions by early summer. During the pandemic, the town takes employee and public health seriously and will provide COVID-safe protocols and equipment. Only applicants 18 years of age or older and who have a valid driver's license can be considered. All positions are full-time, with time and a half paid for any hours worked over 40 per week. Questions about these positions? Call the Town Manager's Office at (802) 479-9331.

### Public Works

**DPW Helper:** Do you like to work outdoors? The town needs four seasonal helpers from mid-May to August to work with the Department of Public Works (DPW). These seasonal employees help with summer road and utility work. Tasks include clearing brush blocking the view of drivers, fixing man-holes and catch basins, and traffic control at work sites. Flagging training is provided. The regular schedule is Monday through Friday, 7:00am-3:30pm. The department may use a four, 10-hour day schedule during part of the summer. In that case the hours would be 6:00am-4:30pm. The first summer

pay rate for 2022 is \$16.00 an hour. A bonus of up to \$1.25 per hour will be paid for good attendance.

**Town Engineer's Office:** A student majoring in civil engineering or a closely related field is needed to assist the Town Engineer oversee summer construction and road paving, and complete office work. Start times will vary between 7:00am and 8:00a.m. depending on the day's work. The schedule is usually 40 hours a week. The first summer pay rate for 2022 is \$18.00. A bonus of up to \$1.25 per hour will be paid for good attendance.

### Recreation and Cemeteries

**Assistant:** The Assistant Cemetery Sexton/Assistant Recreation Maintenance Supervisor will learn from an experienced Sexton and Supervisor what it takes to keep three cemeteries, six playgrounds, three bike paths, and several sports fields and courts in good shape. The position is mid-April until early December, usually 40 hours a week. The first summer pay rate for 2022 is \$19.57 an hour. The Assistant will perform maintenance work when not meeting with the Sexton.

**Cemetery Laborer:** Spend your summer working outdoors on a small crew earning satisfaction as well as a paycheck helping maintain town properties. The typical work week is Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 3:30pm or 35 hours per week, subject to weather, with occasional weekend work. The work season is late April to mid-November. Most work time is spent mowing and trimming grass. The Cemetery crew also services the Town's six playgrounds half a day per week. The position helps with burials. Ability to use hand tools and weed-eater, operate a riding mower and drive a one-ton dump truck is required. A CDL is not required.

**Recreation Laborer:** Another outdoor, seasonal position is needed for the small Recreation crew from mid-April into November. The usual work week is M-F, 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. or 40 hours per week, with some weekend morning hours. The Recreation crew works mostly at Barre Town's main recreation area, but goes to other sites as needed, including bike paths and cemeteries. Duties include daily litter and trash pickup, mowing, trimming, maintaining athletic fields and courts, light building maintenance and special projects. Equipment used include riding mowers, weed trimmers and chain-saw on occasion.

**To apply:** The application for these positions can be picked up at the Town Offices at 149 Websterville Road or downloaded from the [www.barretown.org/Permits\\_Forms/employmentapplication.pdf](http://www.barretown.org/Permits_Forms/employmentapplication.pdf). Submit your application by email to [offices@barretown.org](mailto:offices@barretown.org) or by mail to Town of Barre, PO Box 116 Websterville, VT 05678. Application review will begin on March 21.

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*



**REMINDER:**  
**Property & Sewer Taxes**  
**Due**  
**February 15, 2022**

## Project Updates

**110 Bridge and Waterline** – The Vermont Route 110 bridge project is moving along. Due to funding issues the project was slated to start construction in 2024, but now with new funding the project will be constructed in 2023. The project includes replacing the entire bridge during a 60-day closure. Along with the bridge construction a new water line connecting the East Barre Village side to the East Cobble Hill Road side will be constructed and attached to the bridge. This will better serve the East Cobble Hill Road side of East Barre.

**VT 14 and Bridge Street Intersection** – The Vermont Agency of Transportation VT 14 and Bridge Street project is tentatively scheduled for construction in 2024. The project will include upgrading Barre City's water pipes, adding left turn lanes on Rt. 14, and installing a traffic signal. The project is currently in the permitting phase.

**Quarry Hill Intersection** – The State of Vermont Agency of Transportation, VTrans, is in the preliminary design stage of the Quarry Hill intersection project. The project will include a new configuration at Quarry Hill and VT 14 intersection. It will also have two downhill lanes that continue from the Town into Barre City to the VT 14 intersection. Construction for the project is scheduled for 2024.

**Websterville Waterline Project** – Last fall the Town installed 500' of waterline on Littlejohn Road. This completed the waterline upgrade on Littlejohn Road. The next phase is to upgrade the waterline on Brook Street, Libercent Street, and Violette Street. This is part of an ongoing waterline upgrade plan for the Websterville area. The Selectboard is planning to contract for all of the remaining work in one contract. Water engineer, Otter Creek Engineering, is preparing plans and contract documents for construction later this year. These upgrades bring better fire protection and water serviceability to the neighborhood.

**Wilson Industrial Park Waterline** - The Wilson Industrial Waterline Project was put on hold last summer because the Town did not receive State funding. With new information from the State there is a good chance that the Town will receive State Funding this spring, and construction will start this summer. The waterline project includes completing the waterline to connect from Parker Road to Bolster Road. This will give better water quality within the industrial park and on Bolster Road.

**Ash Tree Removal** – The Town has identified that there are 3,500 plus ash trees in the road right of way. To be proactive against the Emerald Ash Boar, the Town is in the process of removing these trees. This winter DPW will be in the area of Cutler Corner Road and Phelps Road. We will send out letters to residents when we will be in their area. If there are ash trees in the right of way next to your property and you would like the wood, the Town will leave the trunk for you. Call the DPW at (802) 476-3522.

## Stormwater Projects

**Recreation Area** - The contractor, Hebert Excavation, finished the project in November. A substantial completion inspection, attended by Town Staff, the Friends of the Winooski River, Hebert, and Watershed Consulting Associates (WCA) was held on December 10. Hebert will return in the spring to touch up the seeding and mulching.

**DPW Yard** - In December WCA visited the DPW Yard to collect some information. A drone was used to collect some information. The permit application was submitted to VT Agency Natural Resources (ANR) in late December. The permit was issued in late January. Construction of this under-

ground chambers stormwater practice still is expected in late 2022. The project is partially funded by a state grant. The Town probably will use CLFRF to pay its share of up to \$40,000.

**Wildersburg Common** - Using some of its ARPA money, the VT ANR awarded the Town and Wildersburg Homeowners Association a Public-Private Partnership Project grant. The 100% grant (up to \$512,525) will pay for final engineering design and construction. The award was announced January 20, 2022. Pre-grant agreement paperwork is underway.

*By Josh Martineau, Town Engineer, and Carl Rogers, Town Manager*

## Applying for Disabled Veteran's Tax Exemption

If you are a disabled veteran, a surviving spouse of a qualifying veteran, or a child of a qualifying disabled veteran, you may be eligible for \$40,000 off the assessed value of your Barre Town primary residence that you own. This means if an eligible veteran lives in a home valued at, for example, \$200,000, then that veteran's home would be taxed at \$160,000.

Veterans are eligible if they are:

- Receiving Disability Compensation at a rating of 50% or higher;
- Receiving Non-Service Connected Pension (also called Improved Pension); or
- Collecting permanent military retirement pay for a medical military retirement.

The state recommends calling the US Department of Veteran Affairs', Benefits line at (800) 827-1000 no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> annually to request proof of eligibility, so that you can provide that proof of eligibility to Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs by the due date of **May 1<sup>st</sup> each year**.

State law mandates a minimum \$10,000 exemption. The law also gives towns the option to increase the exemption to \$40,000, with remaining town taxpayers sharing the cost of the remaining \$30,000 in value per residence. In recognition of veterans who have sacrificed so much, Barre Town voted to increase its exemption to \$40,000 (from \$20,000) in 2007. This share appears as the "local agreement rate" on our tax bills.

*Source:* <https://veterans.vermont.gov/benefits-and-services/veteran-benefits/tax-exemptions-veterans>.

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*

## Reappraisal Scorecard

The state uses three statistics to check the validity of a completed appraisal. Essentially, a municipality receives a pass-fail grade for each test. The Town's reappraisal passed all three tests.

In December, the state released its 2021 Equalization Study results. The letter states the Town's common level of appraisal (CLA) and its coefficient of dispersion (COD), which are calculated after the annual property sales study. Barre Town's CLA for 2021 is 103.79%. This statistic is needed because of the state-wide education tax rate. The CLA helps assure property owners across the state are paying their fair share of taxes. It helps prevent a town from assessing its properties at, say 75% of market value, so its taxpayers can pay less state education taxes. Barre Town's CLA over 100% means when the state sets the state education tax rate, Barre Town's actual rate will be lowered.

The December letter advised Barre Town's COD is 7.22%. This is a good score. This statistic "is a measure of how fairly distributed the property tax is within your town. A high COD means that within your town many taxpayers are paying more than their fair share and many are paying less than their fair share. A COD over 20% necessitates a reappraisal."

The Board of Civil Authority (Board of Tax Appeals) finished its appeal hearings and decisions in November. The BCA's decisions resulted in a net decrease to the Grand List of \$1,970,678 or .2% of the total Grand List. Thirty owners had their appeals heard and received an assessed value determination. Of those, four have taken their appeal up the appeal chain – three to the state Division of Property Valuation and Review and one to state court. There is no word about when those cases will be heard.

*By Carl Rogers, Town Manager*

### Filing Homestead Declaration Form

If you own the Vermont home in which you live, you must file the Homestead Declaration Form (HS-122) every year. **You must file the HS-122 even if you do not have to file a state income tax return**, for example if you are retired. Filing the HS-122 on an eligible property ensures that you will pay the lower tax rate assessed by the state for education, and not the higher non-homestead education tax rate. If you do not file an HS-122 each year by the deadline, your taxes for the coming year will be based on the non-homestead rate. In Barre Town, the non-homestead education tax rate has been higher than the residential rate for the last eighteen years. On average over the last five years, the non-homestead total tax rate in Barre Town has been 14% higher than the residential rate.

**Deadline and penalties:** The deadline to file your HS-122 with the Vermont Department of Taxes is April 18, 2022 for the home you own and live in as of April 1, 2022. You will be assessed a penalty if you file after April 18, 2022 because of the extra work it creates to correct your taxes after they've already been changed for the new tax year. The penalty is up to 3% of your education tax bill if the non-homestead rate is higher than the homestead rate, and up to 8% if the non-homestead rate is lower than the homestead rate. If you miss the April 18 deadline, it is still worth filing by October 17, 2022, because your tax rate will be corrected if you file by the October date.

**Take note:** If your household made less than an amount specified by the state during calendar year 2021 (whether from a job, retirement income, or other income), you may be eligible for a property tax credit. To claim a property tax credit, file a Household Income (HI-144) Form with your HS-122 (both Sections A and B) by the same deadlines: April 18, 2022 to be on time, or by October 17, 2022 with a penalty. The late filing penalty for the HI-144 is \$15. Filing the HI-144 at the same time as your HS-122 will potentially reduce your tax burden even more. The maximum household income to be eligible for a property tax credit for 2021 is \$136,900. If your household made less than that in 2021, file an HI-144 this year.

Since **retirees** often do not file income taxes, they sometimes overlook filing an HI-144 and HS-122 and potentially are paying thousands of dollars more than they need to in property taxes. If you have an older family member or friend, check to make sure they are submitting their forms.

If your home is **leased** on April 1, 2022, but for not more than 182 days in the 2021 calendar year, you may still claim it as a homestead.

**Accessing the forms:** The 2022 HS-122, and HI-144, can be completed online once myVTax becomes available at <https://myvtax.vermont.gov>, planned for February 1. If you would

rather fill out a paper form, you can print out the form from <https://tax.vermont.gov/property-owners/homestead-declaration>, or get one from the Barre Town Assessor's office. Call (802) 479-2595 to have one mailed to you. Or you may arrange to print out the HS-122 and HS-144 forms at the Aldrich Library for 60 cents for all four pages in black and white. Call them for a computer appointment at (802) 476-7550.

More information is online at [tax.vermont.gov/property-owners/homestead-declaration](https://tax.vermont.gov/property-owners/homestead-declaration). Call the Assessor's Office at (802) 479-2595 with any questions.

### Seeking Volunteers

**Cemetery Commissioner:** Are you interested in local history, value stewardship, or simply like to be of service? Consider applying for the vacant seat on the Cemetery Commission. This five-member body appointed by the Selectboard has oversight responsibility of the town's cemeteries. It establishes the policies, rules and regulations for operation of the cemeteries; sets prices for services provided; lays out lots, drives and paths; and recommends to the Selectboard prices for burial lots. The Cemetery Sexton keeps the Commission informed of operational matters. The Cemetery Commission meets monthly spring through fall. Terms are 5 years, although the term of the current vacancy expires May 31, 2024. Questions? Call the Town Manager's Office at (802) 479-9331.

**Bulk Trash volunteer:** Did you know the popular Bulk Trash Collections the town organizes twice a year at the Public Works yard relies on volunteers? If you appreciate this service, please consider volunteering to unload vehicles, or encourage someone else to volunteer. Some of the long-serving regulars are finding it harder physically to do the unloading. New, able-bodied volunteers are needed to keep this service affordable and efficient. Those who work Bulk Trash will tell you it's a fun half-day around cheerful people and grateful neighbors. Volunteers get to dispose of one vehicle load of bulky waste of their own at no charge, have first pick of salvageable items, and get breakfast and lunch. Call the Town Manager's Office at (802) 479-9331 to have your name added to the volunteer list.

**Housing Advisory Committee Member:** The Barre Town Housing Advisory Committee is made up of five members from the community, and one seat is vacant. The Housing Advisory Committee is responsible for suggesting housing related amendments to the zoning and subdivision bylaws. This body meets as needed and has not met regularly for some time. However, it is helpful for the town to have such a committee to advise the Selectboard on issues related to housing. Questions? Contact Planning and Zoning Director Chris Violette at (802) 479-2595 or [cviolette@barretown.org](mailto:cviolette@barretown.org).

**Deputy Health Officer:** If you care about public health, especially when it comes to rental properties, consider serving the town as its Deputy Town Health Officer. Training is provided at no cost, and you would be working with the town's experienced Town Health Officer. This position serves when the Town Health Officer is not available, usually a few times a year. Deputies and Town Health Officers are nominated by the Selectboard and appointed by the Vermont Commissioner of Health to three-year terms.

**To be considered** for any of these positions, send a statement of your interest to [offices@barretown.org](mailto:offices@barretown.org) or to Town Manager's Office, P.O. Box 116, Websterville, VT 05678.

*By Elaine Wang, Assistant Town Manager*

### **BOARD AND COMMISSION REPORTS**

**Development Review Board** – *By Cindy Spaulding; Members: M. Reaves, C. Sanborn, J. Valsangiacomo, C. Neddo, A. Valentini, J. Fecteau and M. Gilbar. Alternates: M. Titus and A. Labrador*

***CUP=Conditional Use Permit; SD=Subdivision; BLA=Boundary Line Adjustment***

***November 2021:*** Approved BLA: Harold Putney and Avon & Mary Robertson at 8 and 12 Christie Street; SD (deferral lift) Brian and Shannon Bailey located off of Neddo Road; Continued Variance: HP Hood continued to December meeting.

***December 2021:*** Approved Variances (setbacks & height): HP Hood to build two silos at 219 Allen Street; SD: Pinard/Bailey amend revert back to original two lot subdivision land located on Cassie Street.

***January 2022:*** No business. Meeting cancelled.

**Planning Commission** – *By Cindy Spaulding; Members: C. Sanborn, C. Violette, T. Reil, B. Atwood, G. Clain, M. Gilbar and C. Chase*

***AUD=Allowed Use Determination***

***November 2021:*** Approved AUD: Mark Tatro/Tatro Appliances at 272 Morrison Road (former original Bond Warehouse).

***December 2021:*** Approved AUD: Jerri & Stephen Howard/Maple Harvest Specialties at 50 Washington Road.

***January 2022:*** Round table discussion: Rules of Procedure, updates on CVRPC and legislative bill H.524.

**Traffic Safety Advisory Committee** - *By Josh Martineau; Members: S. Corbett, J. Blow, W. Kirby, Dave Freeman, Bret Meyer*

***October 2021:*** No Meeting.

***November 2021:*** Approved traffic study on Beckley Hill; Approved traffic study on Farwell Street; Approved “No Outlet” sign on Al Monty Drive.

***December 2021:*** No Meeting.