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## The hard-won campaign to honor Martin Luther King Jr.

BY TERRI J. HUCK

*The Vermont Journal & The Shopper*

REGION - Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which falls on Jan. 16 this year,



Coretta Scott King (far left) looks on as President Ronald Reagan signs legislation establishing Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983.

PHOTO PROVIDED

is the result of a long, tireless struggle to honor the man who was the chief leader of nonviolent activism during the Civil Rights Movement. The legislative effort to establish a

national holiday took 15 years, and full nationwide participation took another 17 years.

Within days of King's assassination in April 1968, Michigan Rep. John Conyers first introduced legislation calling for a federal holiday; he continued to do so year after year as lawmakers refused to move the bill forward. In the meantime, Illinois, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey passed statewide laws to commemorate King.

A bill to honor him with a federal holiday finally moved through Congress in 1979—after multiple congressional appearances by King's widow, the late Coretta Scott King; pressure from then-President Jimmy Carter; and a grassroots lobbying effort. However, the bill fell five votes short of passage, with opponents arguing that it would be too expensive to give federal employees the day off or that King did not deserve such recognition.

Undeterred, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent So-

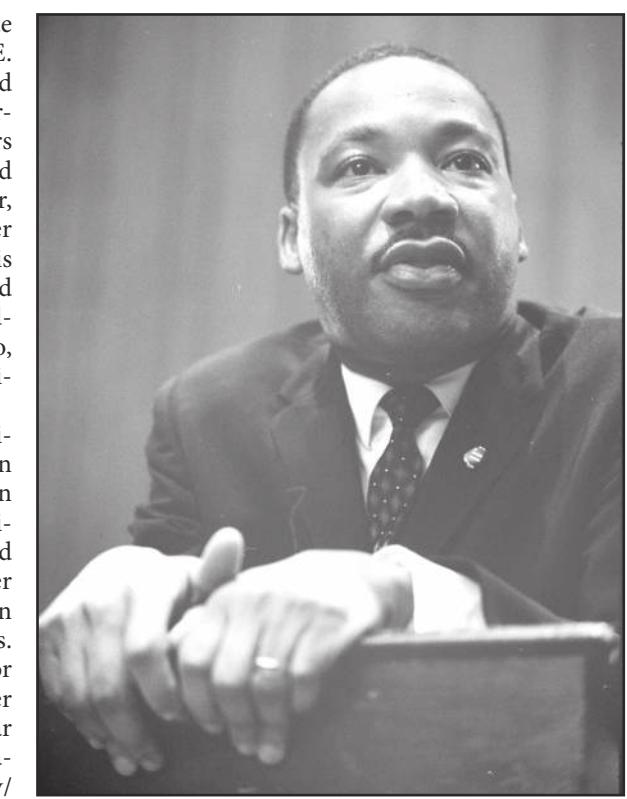
cial Change, established by Coretta Scott King in 1968, sought the support of companies and the public. Stevie Wonder's 1980 hit song "Happy Birthday" popularized the campaign, and 6 million people signed a petition urging Congress to pass the law, which had been reintroduced by Indiana Rep. Katie Hall.

In 1983, Congress finally approved the bill, and President Ronald Reagan signed it into law. It didn't take effect until 1986, and even then, many states resisted or combined it with other holidays. It wasn't until 2000 that all 50 states officially observed the holiday. Arizona, New Hampshire and Utah were the last three states to recognize it, and South Carolina was the last to designate it as a paid holiday for state employees. Previously, those employees could choose between Martin Luther King Jr. Day and three Confederate holidays.

Even today, some states still combine Martin Luther King Jr. Day

with Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's birthday, and less than 40 percent of employers treat it as a paid holiday. However, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is celebrated around the world, including in Toronto, Canada, and Hiroshima, Japan.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed legislation that urges Americans to spend Martin Luther King Jr. Day in service to others. To learn more or find a volunteer opportunity near you, go to NationalService.gov/MLKDay.



Martin Luther King, Jr. 1964.

PHOTO PROVIDED

## Tax refund to TransCanada passes

BY JOEL SLUTSKY

*The Shopper*

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. - The rollercoaster ride around TransCanada tax refunds neared its conclusion at a special Rockingham Town Selectboard meeting recently.

At issue was millions of dollars in annual taxes: TransCanada pays municipal taxes to the village of Bellows Falls and the town of Rockingham and education taxes to the state of Vermont.

A motion passed that the Rocking-

ham Selectboard, in keeping with the State Supreme Court's recent decision, issue a refund for excess taxes of \$346,264 paid by TransCanada for the years 2012-2014.

The amount included taxes of \$224,552 and interest of \$121,711, and authorized the municipal manager to forward a check in that amount, along with a letter of explanation, to the company.

It was agreed that the town's position was that payment would have to be made and therefore interest would no longer accrue on the amount of

taxes refunded.

Municipal Manager Shaun O'Keefe noted that he recently received the 2016 audit, which shows an unrestricted fund balance of \$951,584, which is ample funds to cover the payment to TransCanada.

The taxpayer, TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc., had appealed a Superior Court order setting the value of its Bellows Falls hydroelectric facility at \$130 million, with \$108,495,400 taxable by the Town of Rockingham.

TransCanada argued that the Superior Court erred when it relied on tes-

timony of the Town's expert witness.

The court decision stated in part: "The court found that the town's estimate was incredibly low and the court appointed appraisal was found to be a reliable estimate of the fair market value of the facility as of April 1, 2012."

At a September 2015 Selectboard meeting, the municipal manager had reported that the TransCanada appeal on the business taxes was ruled in the town's favor with a value of \$108,495,000, and also noted that the Board of Civil Authority was recom-

mending that the value remain the same for the 2015 tax year.

At that meeting, the Selectboard expressed relief at the decision.

Regarding the new court decision, Selectboard member Peter Golec said that information given to the board at the December 2016 meeting on the TransCanada reimbursement did not add up, and he asked Interim Municipal Manager Shaun O'Keefe to check into the matter.

O'Keefe stated that he had spoken with Rockingham School District Superintendent Chris Kibbee and with

Attorney Richard Saunder on the reimbursement to TransCanada, and on subsequent reimbursement by the village and the school to the town.

Selectboard Chair Lamont Barnett stated that he felt that the town should not request a reimbursement from the school, noting that the school and the town involved the same taxpayers. Barnett also noted that the expense of getting attorneys involved, as well as the attorney general, could be costly.

No decisions were made by the Selectboard.

## Benefit helps Sharlene Beaudry

BY MARY ELLEN CANNON

*The Shopper*

WALPOLE, N.H. - Bands Version Six and 3rd Rail combined to rock the hall at Alyson's Orchard in Walpole recently to help a local woman.

The concert was part of a benefit to support the Beaudry family.

David Howell explained that organizing started just two days before Christmas. The invite was for all to join in celebration of Sharlene Beaudry, and to raise funds to help with medical expenses the family will incur as she copes with ALS.

Beaudry has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also called Lou Gehrig's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

Friends and family of the Beaudry's packed the hall.

The organizing team of Susan and David Howell, Cheryl Gay Sherwin, Ann Beaudry-Torrey, Andrea Chickerling-Sawyer, Heidi and Pat Crotty, Jayne Ballou, Judy Trow, Sharon Tuller, Linda Carroll, Jean Zimmerman created a huge event. They give thanks to Alyson's Orchard owner Susan Jasse and manager Fran Imhoff.

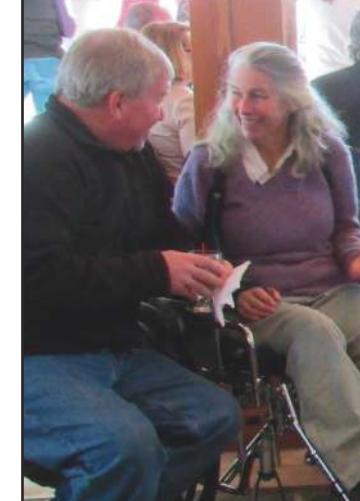
About 180 items were donated to the silent auction: books, maple syrup, art, motorcycle inspections, auto repair work, animal supplies, quilts, gift certificates and others.

Tammy Vittum and



The turnout and participation was gratifying for all who attended.

PHOTO BY MARY ELLEN CANNON



Sharlene Beaudry has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also called Lou Gehrig's disease.

PHOTO BY MARY ELLEN CANNON

leader for more than 20 years, and helped in the schools. She worked part time for the Cheshire County Conservation District.

The family dairy farm is in Walpole. A native of Walpole, the turnout showed she is connected to and appreciated by many people.

An account has been set up at the Savings Bank of Walpole for Sharlene Beaudry. Checks can be made out to the "Sharlene Beaudry Benefit Fund" and mailed to UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H, 33 West St., Keene, NH 03431.

## Approval for trash compactor

BY JOEL SLUTSKY

*The Shopper*

BELLOWS FALLS, Vt. - Deliberation on the municipal recycling budget was a focal point of a recent Rockingham Town Selectboard meeting.

The board agreed on a new line item for purchase of a trash compactor at a cost of \$35,000 installed.

Additionally, Recycling Coordinator Gary DeRosia provided the board with calculations on the impact of increasing the rate for construction debris from 7 cents to 10 cents per ton. DeRosia stated that this would be about a \$8,000 increase in revenue.

The board discussed the impact to the recycling budget from the Windham Solid Waste Management District. Windham Solid Waste had made a decision to shut down its recycling business as of July 1, 2017.

DeRosia noted that the town could expect to pay significantly more for processing and trucking, and recommended that the town purchase a compactor.

The board also changed the recycling budget: Revenue: Brown Goods - increase from \$30,000 to \$35,000; Expenses: Electricity - increase from \$1,000 to \$1,500; Container Transport - decrease from \$21,000 to \$11,000; materials recovery facility (recyclables) processing - increase from \$10,000 to \$32,000.

Additional budget discussion included the 2017 budget status. Interim Municipal Manager Shaun O'Keefe said the budget is

looking good and the town is now 50 percent through the fiscal year and he has no significant concerns.

O'Keefe noted that the zoning fees are down, but expects these will increase in the spring, and the tax sale expense line is at almost 100 percent of budget, and the town attorney is at 116 percent.

Selectboard member Ann DiBernardo asked why the cost for the town attorney was so high, to which O'Keefe stated that it most likely had to do with the recent managerial turnover.

O'Keefe said that he had made changes to the budget at the request of the board: finance staff - increase from \$45,900 to \$72,300 as a result of moving the finance assistant to the municipal manager.

Repairs and maintenance on the Town Hall increased from \$35,000 to \$45,000, and they are awaiting an estimate on roof repair/replacement.

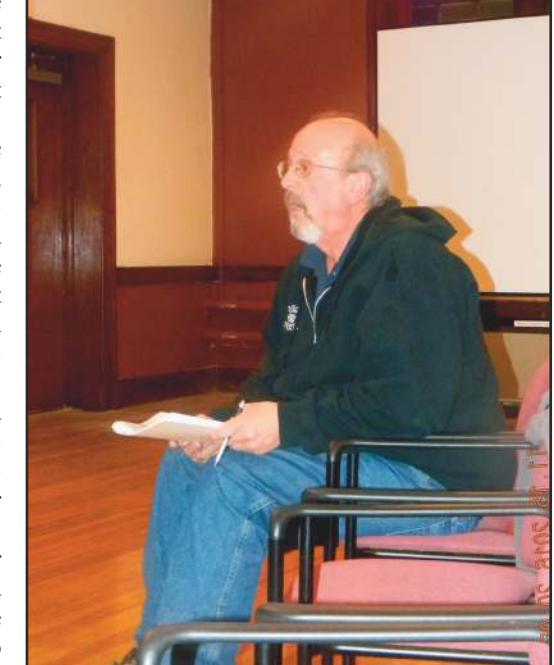
O'Keefe disclosed that contractors Jancewicz and Son were scheduled to look at the roof, which has not gone to bid yet. O'Keefe offered that he was of the opinion that the whole roof should be repaired.

Selectboard Chair Lamont Barnett stated that he thought there should be an evaluation to see if the whole roof does require a total repair.

The Development Office director position is in the budget as a full-time position with benefits. Barnett reminded the board that the position was advertised as a 25-hour position with no benefits.

A motion passed that the development director position remain as a part-time, 25-hour-per-week position without benefits.

Selectboard member Susan Hammond questioned if this would allow sufficient time for grant writing, as it had not been part-time for several



Recycling Coordinator Gary DeRosia.

PHOTO BY JOEL SLUTSKY

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