

More Letters

Education is Not An Area To Cut Corners

To the editor:

I am compelled to clear up some negative misconceptions regarding the Amherst housing market.

The Northern New England Real Estate Network (NNEREN) reports; 151 Homes, 27 Condos and 11 Building Lots (189 total transactions) sold in Amherst in 2014, ranging in price from \$50,000 to \$1,383,000.00, of which I personally sold over \$11 million; with the majority of clients requesting to move/stay within the town itself, and the remainder being relocation clients choosing to move to Amherst from other town/states for the school system.

Furthermore, YTD (past 57 days) as posted in NNEREN, Amherst shows 49 Homes, Condos and Building Lots have either sold or gone Under Contract ranging in price from \$84,900 to \$1,450,000.

Amherst's Housing Market is thriving. Blaming property taxes for a home unable to sell is unwarranted.

ed. If a buyer can't afford the (PITI) principle, interest, taxes, and insurance on a property they wish to purchase, then they shouldn't be looking in that price range.

Both my husband and I grew up here and chose to move our family back for the enriched school environment which provides good student to teacher ratios critical in achieving academic excellence. We are very happy to pay our taxes that support our teachers' salaries, as there is no better investment than our children. Education is not an area to cut corners.

Respectfully,
Gina Aselin
Amherst

Mont Vernon School Board Shares Details of New Teacher Contract

The Mont Vernon School Board would like to share the details and changes of the proposed Mont Vernon Village School Teachers' Contract, and more importantly, to ask you to vote to approve and support the Contract on March 10, 2015. The goals of the Board in renegotiating this contract were to balance the tax demands on Mont Vernon Taxpayers and deliver an increased level of accountability of teachers for their individual job performance, classroom performance outcomes and increase the amount of teaching time in the classroom.

There are two newly modified contract clauses which are innovative and change past practice in the teaching field, relating to teacher accountability and classroom performance. The first clause will prevent an automatic pay step increase, for the following year, for a teacher who is on a formal improvement plan for more than 90 consecutive days. Teachers who are not performing will not receive an automatic pay increase.

The second modified clause deals with reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures when reducing teaching staff. Length of service and seniority is not the only factor when it comes to layoffs, and is no longer the deciding factor if all other considerations are equal. The Superintendent, in a teacher reduction situation, will consider the overall qualifications of the teacher including experience in the teaching area, certification(s), evidence of professional growth in teaching, past evaluations and length of unbroken service. It has long been standard practice to reduce teaching staff by last in, first out. This contract language fixes that long-standing practice in education and would not be longer the case at the Mont Vernon Village School. It allows the Mont Vernon Village School to incorporate many factors in the decision making process if a reduction in force is necessary. This change is particularly important, as the enrollment in the school is declining, and there has been the need to reduce staff in the recent past and potentially the future. We want the ability to retain the best and most qualified teachers for the students of Mont

Vernon and do not want to make this decision based on seniority as a "tie breaker."

Regarding the goal of increased classroom time for teachers, we have consolidated much of the out-of-classroom training into professional development days before the start of the school year, thereby reducing the number of school day interruptions teachers take throughout the year for training. The contract adds one additional day dedicated to professional development at the end of the school year to provide for fewer interruptions of classroom instructional time on school days.

Lastly, the tax impact of this agreement is as follows. It will result in an increase of \$69 for the average home assessed at \$300,000 in Mont Vernon. The main drivers of this increase are teacher salaries and benefits. It is helpful to realize that the teachers have had no COLA increase the past three years. The pay increase would average 3.86% the first year, 3.62% the second year, and 3.54% the third year. The teachers have also agreed to a less expensive dental plan that saves approximately \$6000 per year. Reality is that the teachers need to be compensated and after three years of no COLA increases, they have earned a raise, particularly when considering that inflation is running 2 to 3% per year.

Based on the above facts, the Mont Vernon School Board asks for your vote to approve the Mont Vernon Teachers' Contract. This Contract gives the ability and flexibility to maintain a quality teaching staff. By changing archaic pay and staff reduction practices it allows for much needed teacher accountability in the pay and workforce reduction areas, while adding more teaching days and less disruption to teaching days. Lastly, it compensates the teachers in a manner that minimizes spending and taxes, which the School Board, as taxpayers, are aware of the need to control.

Mont Vernon School Board Members
Kim Roberge, Tom Driscoll,
Trevor Girard, John Quinlan,
and Bruce Schmidt

What's in the Default Budget?

To the editor:

Well, well, it looks like Mr. Guerrette, the Litchfield School District Clerk, has opened a can of worms.

Refusing to send out SB2 ballots for school district warrants because of debate over default budget and how it is attained, is on the one hand, noble in action, but on the other hand, unlawful. So, unless the law is changed, it is what it is and the taxpayer gets popped on the head, no matter what.

Not just a secret in Litchfield, but everywhere in NH school districts. According to a *Telegraph* article, "default budgets...are reduced or increased by debt service, contract, and other obligations previously incurred or mandated by law (read that again) and reduced by one-time expenditures contained in the operating budget."

Yes, indeed, they can add on to the default budget without taxpayer approval and there can be a large difference between the voter approved and adjusted default budget. So, the adjusted default budget may actually be much higher than the voter approved default budget. Nasty, nasty.

The Amherst School District FY2016 budget increase is really much more than stated in the ASD Deliberative Guide if all articles are voter approved March 10th. For example, the voter approved default for 2015 was \$24,299,556. The total ASD proposed budget, including warrant articles for 2016 is \$25,677,515 or a \$1,377,959 increase over 2015.

The SHS FY2016 proposed is also more than that stated in the Deliberative Guide. The 2016 proposed budget, plus articles total \$18,301,241. The actual voter approved default budget for 2015 was \$17,864,643. The difference is not as much as that for ASD, but is \$436,598.

The actual MVVS voter approved default 2015 budget was \$4,241,108. The proposed total MVVS 2016 budget is \$4,783,165, including teacher's union increase, an increase of 12.8% or \$542,057.

Please Support Article 3

To the editor:

The members of the Mont Vernon Education Association (MVEA) are asking the Mont Vernon residents to support our proposed contract and school budget. You are well aware of the value the Mont Vernon teachers and staff bring to school with them every day. These teachers and staff strive to provide an environment that is nurturing, stable and engaging for all students.

The success of Mont Vernon Village School is dependent upon the partnership between MVVS teachers and staff with students, parents and members of the community. Our goal is to provide the best education possible, which requires community support and engagement. To that end, we ask that Mont Vernon residents come out on March 10th in support of Article 3.

Respectfully,
Mont Vernon Education Association

Walk Facing Traffic - Slow Down for Horses

To the editor:

As Spring approaches (we all hope :-)) I think it is important to point out how many people who run, walk or ride bikes don't know what side of the road they are supposed to be on. This was something that they would have learned in drivers ed (pages 96 & 97 of the NH State Drivers Manual), if they hadn't learned it from their parents. If you are walking or running, you should be facing traffic. If you are riding, you should be riding with the traffic and obeying the same laws as if you were driving a car.

If you are driving a car and you come upon a horse being hand walked, ridden or driven, you should slow down (30mph or less) and give them plenty of room. Horses, no matter how well trained, are unpredictable and can spook easily. (page 99 of the NH State Drivers Manual)

"Please slow down and pass wide, and allow as much room as feasible between the horse and the vehicle. Slowing down allows the horse handler, rider or driver enough time to realize a vehicle is approaching and to make sure the horse is prepared for the vehicle to pass. When approaching a horse from the rear, it is important to know that the horse and handler, rider or driver is going to be less aware of your presence, so please be cautious. NEVER sound the horn or create loud noises, as this might cause the horse to spook." Equinesite.com

Thank You,
Sheri Nivens
Mont Vernon

Article 4. Shall the Mont Vernon School District, if Article 3 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address Article 3 cost items only? Majority vote required to pass.

The Mont Vernon School Board unanimously recommends the passage of this article by a vote of 5 to 0.
The Mont Vernon School District Budget Committee unanimously recommends the passage of this article by a vote of 4 to 0.

Yes
No

End of Ballot

OFFICIAL BALLOT

MONT VERNON SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 10, 2015

Sue Leger
Sue Leger
Mont Vernon School District Clerk

Mont Vernon School District

March 10, 2015

For **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER** for **THREE** Years
Vote for not more than TWO

Wesley Sonner
Sarah Lawrence

(Write-In)

(Write-In)

For **SCHOOL DISTRICT MODERATOR** for **ONE** Year
Vote for not more than ONE

David Sturm

(Write-In)

For **SCHOOL DISTRICT CLERK** for **ONE** Year
Vote for not more than ONE

(Write-In)

For **SCHOOL DISTRICT TREASURER** for **ONE** Year
Vote for not more than ONE

Lyn Jennings

(Write-In)

Article 2. Shall the Mont Vernon School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amount set forth on the budget posted with the warrant, or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$4,725,302? Should this article be defeated, the operating budget shall be \$4,637,058, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Mont Vernon School District or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Majority vote required to pass.

The estimated tax impact of passing this article is an increase of \$2.48 per \$1000.
The estimated tax impact of not passing this article is an increase of \$2.16 per \$1000.

The Mont Vernon School Board recommends the passage of this article by a vote of 4 to 1.
The Mont Vernon School District Budget Committee does not recommend the passage of this article by a vote of 3 to 1.

Yes
No

Article 3. Shall the Mont Vernon School District approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Mont Vernon School Board and the Mont Vernon Education Association which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at current staffing levels:

Year	Estimated Increase
2015 - 2016	\$57,863
2016 - 2017	\$54,729
2017 - 2018	\$55,396

And further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$57,863 for the 2015 - 2016 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current staffing levels paid in the prior fiscal year. Majority vote required to pass.

The estimated tax impact of passing this article is an increase of \$0.23 per \$1000.


The Mont Vernon School Board unanimously recommends the passage of this article by a vote of 5 to 0.
The Mont Vernon School District Budget Committee unanimously recommends the passage of this article by a vote of 4 to 0.

Yes
No


Please turn over to continue to vote...

Tom and Norma McKinney
Mont Vernon

THE TOADSTOOL BOOKSHOPS



MARYANN COCCA-LEFFLER & DAUGHTER JANINE
Sat., March 28, 2 p.m.



Mother and daughter have teamed up to create a wondrously powerful picture book for children celebrating the uniqueness in each of us with, "JANINE". We'll have a reading and signing, followed by cake!
On sale NOW!

Visit our website for all the details and more!
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