

middle TOWN NEWS letter

January 2017

Regenerative Gardening

Sunday, January 8, at 2:30 pm

The *Tea & Conversation Series* continues at the Library with Judy Robinson's talk about **Regenerative Gardening**.

Progressive farmers and ranchers around the world are practicing regenerative agriculture in an effort to address climate change. As backyard gardeners, we can follow their lead. With winter upon us, we can get excited about new ideas on how to grow our flowers and veggies while helping to save the planet, all at the same time.

Join us for tea, cookies, and conversation!

Co-sponsored by the Library Trustees and the Friends of the Library.

For more information, contact the Library at 235-2435 or middletownspringslibrary@gmail.com.

School News

MSES will again be participating in Odyssey of the Mind (OOTM). OOTM is an opportunity for students to participate in a number of open-ended problems. The problems range from creating a vehicle, constructing a basal wood tower to carry as much weight as possible, to reimaging a classic story. The solutions are child-developed with the role of coach guiding the process. At the state competition, the teams will also participate in the spontaneous challenge where students are presented with a problem and collaborate on a solution in a specified amount of time.

The school was fortunate to receive a Tinkering Grant from the Montshire Museum and the Vermont Afterschool Alliance. Tinkering is defined as the playful, exploratory, social and interactive style of engaging with science content by creating a personal meaningful object. When people are tinkering, they are constantly trying out ideas, making adjustments and refinements; and experimenting with new possibilities. This is the type of creativity and wide interests that we want our students to develop at MSES.

School District Consolidation News

see attached update - begins on page 3!

Library Programs

Toddler Time: Stories, songs, and a snack for our youngest patrons and their caregivers. Join Melissa and Martha on Wednesday mornings at 9:30am Jan. 11-Feb 15. Come to one, or come to them all!

The **Library Book Group** will discuss Roz Chast's *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* on Thursday, January 26, 7 pm, at the Library. Copies of the book are available at the Library. A complete list of books & discussion dates can be picked up at the Library, found on the Library's website ([click here](#)).

Knitting Circle: First Monday of the month (7-9 pm), October-May. Novice to experienced knitters welcomed. Come for inspiration, technical support, and quiet conversation.

Library programs are free and open to the public. More information available at the library. Stop in or call 235-2435, or make digital contact: middletownspringslibrary@gmail.com or <https://middletownsprings.wordpress.com>.

Sunday Basketball

Community Basketball at the Elementary School this winter.

- 4-6pm Sundays beginning January 8
- Pick-up basketball
- All ages and abilities
- Children under 10 should bring an adult or a responsible older sibling

Adult Basketball

I would like to gauge if there might be any interest in weekly (week-night or weekend) adult basketball. More friendly competition than Sundays and for 15 years old and older only.

Contact Justin Hier for info or questions 235-1297 or justinhier@hotmail.com

Town Report DEADLINE

Submissions for the 2016 Town Report deadline is January 10. Submissions should be emailed to Patty Kenyon at pmhkenyon@vermontel.net or dropped off at the Town Office for inclusion in the Town Report by **Tuesday, January 10, 2017**.

Calendar of Events

January

Fire Dept. Training	Tues 3	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Building Committee	Wed 4	7 pm	MSHS
Historical Society	Thurs 5	7 pm	MSHS
Tea & Conversation	Sun 8	2:30 pm	Library
Planning Commission	Mon 9	4 pm	Town Office
Knitting Circle	Mon 9	7-9 pm	Library
Town Report Deadline	Tues 10		
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 10	6:30 pm	Firehouse
School Board	Thurs 12	6 pm	School
Select Board	Thurs 12	7 pm	Town Office
First Response	Sun 15	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 17	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Building Committee	Thurs 19	7 pm	Library
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 24	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Library Trustees	Wed 25	6 pm	Library
Select Board	Thurs 26	7 pm	Town Office
Book Group	Thurs 26	7 pm	Library
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 31	6:30 pm	Firehouse

February

Building Committee	Wed 1	7 pm	MSHS
Historical Society	Thurs 2	7 pm	MSHS
Planning Commission	Mon 4	4 pm	Town Office
Knitting Circle	Mon 4	7-9 pm	Library
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 7	6:30 pm	Firehouse
School Board	Thurs 9	6 pm	School
Select Board	Thurs 9	7 pm	Town Office
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 14	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Building Committee	Thurs 16	7 pm	Library
First Response	Sun 19	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 21	6:30 pm	Firehouse
Library Trustees	Wed 22	6 pm	Library
Select Board	Thurs 23	7 pm	Town Office
Book Group	Thurs 23	7 pm	Library
Fire Dept. Training	Tues 24	6:30 pm	Firehouse

Calendar Events – subject to change.

When in doubt, please check with the organization for details.

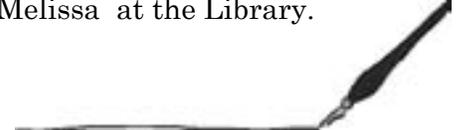
TOWN NEWSLETTER

Lots of information in a snippet & list format, plus a Calendar of Events. No ads, articles, or minutes.

This supplements and enhances the Town website & Front Porch Forum, and will serve the needs of those who don't regularly use computers.

Digital copies are available as a PDF. The PDF is posted to FPF or the Town website or is sent free via email to those who sign up. It is also available in hard copy, delivered by USPS, to those who subscribe for \$6 a year postage. Copies are posted at the Town Office, Grant's Village Store, and the Library.

Questions: call 235-2435, or email middletownspringslibrary@gmail.com to reach Kimberly & Melissa at the Library.



Submit News & Events to:

Middletown Springs Public Library
PO Box 1206
Middletown Springs, VT 05757
middletownspringslibrary@gmail.com

Deadline: 25th of the month
for inclusion in upcoming issue.

Overdue Library Books: Got some?

Please return them, no matter how overdue... we never scold!

You are in good company. A patron recently returned a book 57 years late! to the New York Public Library system.

Milestones

DEATHS:

Joseph Albert Teer Sr.
December. 4, 2016

Wells Springs Merger Consolidation of School Governance

Community Update - Late December 2016

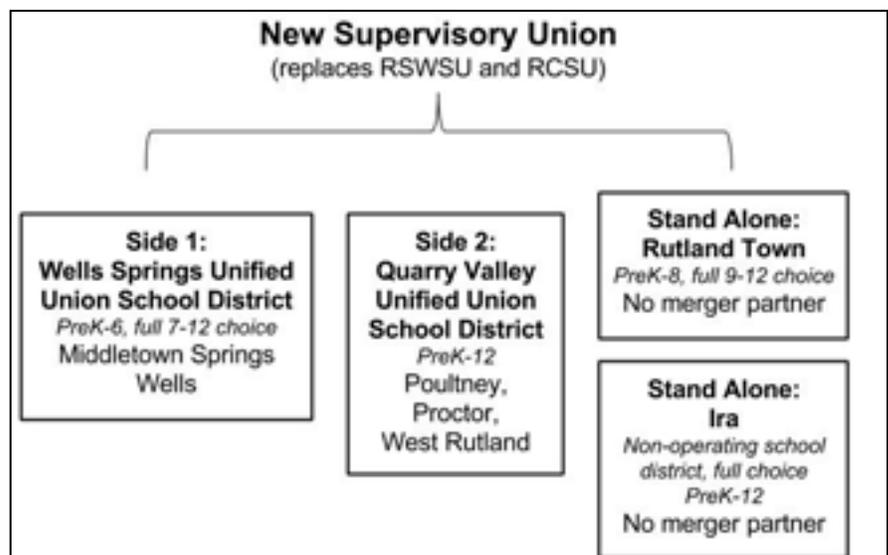
In response to Vermont's Act 46, the school districts of Middletown Springs and Wells have developed a proposal to merge into one school district, with one budget, one school board, and two schools - both of which would remain open for the foreseeable future. The goals of Act 46 are to provide equity, increase educational opportunities, and to maximize efficiencies. The law provided four pathways for school districts to pursue a merger, offered incentives for merging within a specified schedule, and established penalties for those districts that did not merge. After many months of discussions, the school districts of Middletown Springs and Wells have developed a proposal to merge into Wells Springs Unified Union School District.

There are two particular rules that have had a large impact on the development of the Middletown Springs/Wells merger. First is a requirement that merging districts must have the same structure (ie: all operate K-6 with 7-12 choice, all operate K-12, all operate K-8 with 9-12 choice, etc). Second is a stipulation that a district can only be in one formal study committee at a time. Once two or more districts vote to establish a formal study committee to pursue a merger, a district cannot enter a formal study with other districts, and cannot get out of their original study, unless it disbands entirely.

In early 2016, Wells entered a formal study with Pawlet and Rupert. After a number of Act 46 study committee meetings and well attended community forums, the committee voted to disband, as there was not agreement among the committee on how best to unify the three school districts particularly on the issue of school choice versus designation.

The school districts of Wells and Middletown Springs have worked closely together for years in the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union. After the disbanding of the Pawlet, Rupert, and Wells study committee, the School Boards of Wells and Middletown Springs voted to work together to merge school districts for a PreK-6 district with full 7-12 choice. Each district selected study committee members, who began to work immediately with consultant Steve Sanborn. The task of the committee was to determine if it was advisable for Middletown Springs and Wells to merge, and if so, to write the Articles of Agreement which would form the legal basis for the new district.

The Wells Springs merger is being proposed as a part of a larger reorganization of the Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union (RSWSU) and Rutland Central Supervisory Union (RCSU). The premise is that being part of a larger organization will help improve efficiencies and deliver better educational opportunities. It also allows the Wells Springs merger to meet the requirements of Act 46. The number of students involved in the Wells Springs merger (less than 300), and number of school districts (two), are not sufficient for the merger to take place on its own. In the language of Act 46, a "Side by Side" configuration is being proposed, which is one of the four Act 46 path-



ways for consolidation. Side One would be Wells Springs, a unification of Wells and Middletown as a PreK to 6, full 7-12 choice district under one board and one budget. Side Two would be a unification of Poultney, Proctor and West Rutland into the PreK - 12 Quarry Valley Unified Union School District, with its own single board and budget. The two “sides” would be part of a newly formed single Supervisory Union, replacing RSWSU and RCSU. The school districts of Rutland Town (PreK-8, 9-12 choice) and Ira (non-operating school, PreK-12 choice) have not found merger partners, and are proposed to be “stand alone” districts within the new Supervisory Union.

To achieve this “Side by Side” configuration, the Wells Springs study committee requested that they be formal members of what has become the Rutland Central and Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union Act 46 Study Committee, which now includes Poultney, Proctor, West Rutland, Rutland Town, Wells, and Middletown Springs with Ira as an informal member. This was approved by all Boards and study committee members.

To secure incentives and avoid penalties, the proposal for a merger, including the articles of agreement, needed to be finalized by November 2016 and submitted to the Agency of Education for review in December of 2016. This has been completed. The next step is for the entire “Side by Side” proposal to be presented to the State Board of Education in early January 2017. Once the State Board approves the plan, then the proposal will be presented to the voters on the March 2017 town meeting day ballot. **All of the school districts involved in the merger (Middletown, Wells, Poultney, Proctor, West Rutland) need to approve the proposal for the Wells Springs merger to proceed.** If Middletown and/or Wells do not approve the proposal, the Quarry Valley merger can still proceed if Poultney, Proctor, West Rutland all vote yes. This is because the Quarry Valley merger has more students and school districts involved so it can meet Act 46 size requirements without Wells Springs.

The Wells Springs merger, in a “Side by Side” with the Quarry Valley merger, provides a sensible path forward for the communities of Middletown Springs and Wells. It maintains both community schools and joins towns with similar populations and values. The merged district will offer full 7-12 choice to its families, and increase opportunity, equity and efficiency through increased size. By meeting the requirements of Act 46, the Wells Springs merger will secure both towns the incentives offered under the law, and avoid the penalties imposed for not merging. Wells Springs will keep the small schools grants each district currently gets (a total of more than \$170,000), it will secure tax incentives for the next 4 years, it will be eligible for a transition grant and most importantly Middletown and Wells get to choose their merger partner and write the articles of agreement.

School districts that do not voluntarily merge will lose their small school grants, they are not eligible for tax incentives, and will not get transition grants. Furthermore, by July 2018 the Secretary of Education will have developed a plan to merge districts that have not voluntarily consolidated. If the voters of Middletown Springs and Wells choose not merge, the State will impose their own consolidation plan and our communities will not have any voice in the process.

**Community forums are scheduled for January 24, 2017. Please join us!
5:30 pm at Middletown Springs Elementary School and
7:30 pm at Wells Village School.**

Additional information is available at www.wellsspringsmerger.com

Act 46 Study Committee Members

Middletown Springs: Clarence Haynes, Meredith Morgan, Chris Smid

Wells: Rico Balzano, Courtney Bishop, Sue Burke