

Outdoor Committee on Recreation formed

The creation of the Roxbury Outdoor Committee on Recreation (ROCOR) is a by-product of the ARPA process the Town went through last year. During the phase where resident and taxpayer ideas were gathered, two community members submitted ideas pertaining to outdoor activities.

Early on, Debra Rogler offered up the idea of Loop Trails and later, Kahwa Douoguih was keen to see expanded bike offerings which could include a bike lane along 12A. These ideas were ultimately merged into the Active Transportation ARPA submission.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) suggested that the best approach for our Town would be to develop a “Master Plan on Outdoor Activities.”

VCLT explained that any Town applying for grants from the Vermont Outdoor Recreational Economic Collaborative (VOREC), VTrans and other grant providers stands a much better chance of funding acting from a “Master Plan.” In addition, we were told that if a Town’s network of trails connects

with a neighboring Town, it stands an even better chance of funding.

VLCT recommended we pursue a Municipal Grant to fund a consultant who will assist us in creating our Master Plan. The Master Plan would serve as a playbook from which the Town would work from over many years, in order to build an active recreational system.

- In creating a Master Plan, a consultant would assist us with:
- inventorying existing recreational assets within the Town
 - identifying possible new trails & networks
 - identify and work with 3rd parties like Forest & Parks, landowners, etc...
 - hold public and landowner focus groups to educate, generate ideas & gain collaborative buy-in
 - identify and outreach to similar efforts or groups in neighboring towns

In August-2023 the Selectboard allocated \$4k-\$6k from the ARPA grant to cover the Town’s share of a Municipal grant. Town’s are allowed one Municipal Grant per year and the Roxbury Planning Commission put in for one in October which was recently awarded. This will be a long-term project, and ROCOR committee members will meet in early January to begin the process. 🏠

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Artwork in this issue by Jane Pincus and Heidi Albright.

www.roxburyvt.org

Do you have upcoming newsletter submissions, suggestions, or corrections to the mailing list?

Please contact the RFL at librarian@roxburyfreelibrary.org or 802-485-6860

Thanks to Ryan Zajac, Courtney B. Jenkins, Jane Pincus, and Heidi Albright for compiling, editing, and designing this issue of the Newsy!

We hope you enjoy it.

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Roxbury Roots Awarded a Spark Community Grant

The community group “Roxbury Roots,” sponsored by Vermont Farm and Forest school, was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) in order to start a free Community Supper program in Roxbury. Roots would like to thank these organizations for supporting our community!

VCF offers many community-building grants, and specifically projects that support building social capital—the connective tissue of communities. VCF defines social capital as “*the value developed from working together, connecting across differences, and sharing common place-based experiences. Higher levels of social capital are correlated with better health outcomes, higher educational achievement, increased civic engagement, and greater resilience—all of which help build community vitality.*”

Roxbury Roots shares this goal to increase community resiliency by providing an opportunity for community members to socialize and eat together, and to prepare meals that can be offered to local food banks. Our intention is to build relationships between non-farmers and the local folks that grow food crops so they can support each other and the local foodshed.

Additional benefits to the community include sharing and learning how to garden and prepare fresh food, increasing self-reliance and overall community resiliency in times of climate change and uncertainty.

Roxbury Roots also wants to foster more intergenerational connectivity of children and non-family elders by creating a space for them to interact, share a meal and perhaps be uplifted simply by being together. There are other shared meals in the community, but attendance at those events is largely limited to a single generation.

By sharing a monthly meal as a community, connections across several perceived ideological divisions can be made. Having a space to come together where all are welcome will increase communication and understanding across the whole community.

The suppers will be held on the last Friday of every month from 5-7pm at the Roxbury Community Hall/Senior Center. **Dates for the next few meetings are: January 26, February 23, March 29, 2024.**

Soup and bread will always be provided, potluck dishes are welcome but not necessary. **All are welcome! Please join us.** 🏠

Roxbury Selectboard

Special Vote on Dog Control Ordinance Amendments

The question before the voters at the special Town vote on January 16th, 2024 is:

Shall the Town of Roxbury Amended Dog Control Ordinance, as adopted by the Selectboard on October 16, 2023, be disapproved? (Australian Ballot)

The Selectboard is encouraging Roxbury voters to vote “No” to this question, as we strongly believe the Board acted on a health and safety issue in the best interest of all of Roxbury’s citizens.

In consultation with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), amendments were made to two sections within the existing Dog Control Ordinance in place since August 2005. These changes were enacted in the hopes that Municipal Ticketing would allow the Town to try and come into compliance with State law concerning rabies vaccinations & annual dog registrations.

Ticketing is a standard, non-confrontational solution to this constant and vexing problem. As opposed to currently, where the single solution to all violations in the 2005 Dog Ordinance, after a warning, is to seize and impound an animal.

The goals when making these updates were simply to:

1. Get all dogs, especially unvaccinated dogs, registered with a valid rabies certificate
2. Adopt municipal ticketing as a tool for this ordinance
3. Expand the universe of people who could enforce the ordinance (write tickets)

As dog owners ourselves, we know very well and first-hand that our dogs are a beloved part of our families. Voting “Yes” on this question will roll us back to the original language in the 2005 Dog Control Ordinance, where again the only remedy available to Town officials for all issues is animal seizure & impoundment.

You can find a copy of the updated Dog Control Ordinance on the home page of the Town website (www.roxburyvt.org). The copy found there has the changes highlighted on pages 2 & 3 for your ease of use.

For a more in-depth discussion on the reasoning behind the changes made, you will also find a copy of the Selectboard paper “Opinion on Vote & Background Facts Surrounding the

Recently Amended Roxbury Dog Control Ordinance as at 17-Dec-23” on the Town website.

Join us if you can at 6:00pm on January 8th at the Community Hall, for the second Public Informational Hearing to discuss this topic.

Absentee Ballots for the vote to either uphold or disapprove the Amended Dog Control Ordinance are available. Roxbury Voters should contact the Town Clerk at 802-485-7840 to request a ballot, or stop by the office to pick one up or to vote.

Whether your preference is to uphold or disallow these Dog Control Ordinance changes, please make your voice heard and cast your vote. 🏠

From the Town Clerk

Happy New Year to all and may 2024 bring you good health and lots of joy.

2024 DOG LICENSES

In January, residents can start licensing their dogs. The cost is \$9.00 for a neutered dog and \$13.00 for an un-neutered dog. After April 1st the cost will be \$11.00 for a neutered dog and \$17.00 for an un-neutered dog. Usually in March, there will be a Rabies Clinic at the Town Garage. A notice will be posted once a date is scheduled.

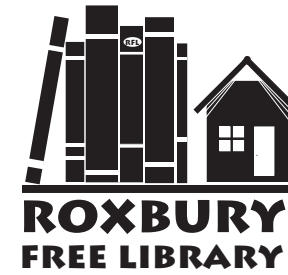
It is the law of the State of Vermont to license dogs annually. Owners of unlicensed dogs can be fined up to \$500 and/or the dog(s) could be impounded and destroyed.

SPECIAL VOTE ON DOG CONTROL ORDINANCE

Speaking of dogs, the Roxbury Selectboard adopted an Amended Dog Control Ordinance in October of 2023. The ordinance is posted on the Town website. A petition was received to have a vote on the amended ordinance. The vote will be on January 16, 2024, at the Town Office, from 10am to 7pm. The vote will be by Australian Ballot. You may request an absentee ballot by calling the Town Clerk at 802-485-7840 or email townclerk@roxburyvt.org. The last day to request an Absentee Ballot is January 15. Please keep in mind when requesting the ballot that mail delivery is sometimes uncertain, and be sure to make your request early enough for it to get to you. You may also stop by the office and pick one up, or vote at the office.

There will be an Informational Meeting on January 8, 2024, at 6pm, at the Community Hall.

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Roxbury Free Library Notes

Happy New Year, Roxbury!

We wonder how many of you have been eagerly anticipating as much as us the upcoming 2024 milestone in Roxbury’s history? In case you’re not up on the 20th Century happenings in Roxbury, **we are excited to announce that the RFL, as we now know it, is turning 90 years old this year!** While we know books and ideas are capital worthy of transferring between generations, we think it only fitting to celebrate the successful history of our library, which has been informing and entertaining our community for all those years. So, we are planning to mark the occasion with events and activities throughout 2024. We have pulled together a committee of supporters to spearhead the planning and organizing. If you would like to get involved or have any suggestions for how to celebrate the past, present, and future of our library please let us know. We would love to hear your ideas just as much as we’d like to see you engaged with some of those happenings. We anticipate the events to start rolling out late in the winter or early spring—so stay tuned. **Until then, stop in sometime and find your new favorite book (winter and spring hours: Tue. 10:00-6:00; Wed. 8:00-11:00; Thur. 2:00-5:00; and Sat. 10:00-3:00).**

On Jan. 15th, at 7:00pm, the **Roxbury Book Club** will meet to discuss Russell Banks’s book *Magic Kingdom*. At the time this article goes to print, there are still extra copies available at the RFL.

As we start 2024, **we have more than 1.4 million items available to everyone in our community.** Don’t be shy, come enjoy all that is available to you through the RFL. Don’t want to come in? We can help you connect with all the digital services available through the RFL as well, just ask.

Finally, please note, we will try to maintain a supply of free COVID-19 testing kits available to the public, but much has changed on the test kits’ distribution, and we are no longer sure how consistently we will be able to keep them available. Please let us know if you have any questions or if you would like some tests while we still have them.

From all of us at the RFL, we wish you all the best in 2024, Ryan, Caitlyn, Lisa, and your RFL volunteers and Trustees 🏠

Roxbury Ice Rink 2024

Weather permitting, we hope to have the community ice rink filled and ready for skating in the first week or two of 2024. As a general reminder, the rink is open to everyone and anyone. The school tends to use the rink in the mornings or afternoons, but usually not five day a week. So, there is plenty of ice time for you and yours. Do not park in front of the Fire Dept. while using the rink! Parking is available either in the small area in front of the rink or at the Town Office. Please be respectful and clean up the ice and bench area after you finish. If you have any questions or interest in getting involved, please reach out to Ryan Zajac at 485-4278—there are many ways to help out, thanks for considering. Embrace winter and enjoy the ice. 🏠

WINTER/SPRING LIBRARY HOURS

TUE 10:00 – 6:00
WED 8:00 – 11:00
THU 2:00 – 5:00
SAT 10:00 – 3:00



Winter Birch
ink and watercolor painting by Heidi Albright

"Town Clerk" continued from page 2...

CREDIT CARDS

The Town has contracted with a company to offer people the opportunity to use their credit/debit card to pay for dog license fees, property taxes, copies, etc. There is a fee being charged by the company for the convenience of using your card. Please keep that fee in mind when using your card. You may access the information on our website, www.roxburyvt.org (Online Payments). The Town does not pay for the service, and does not receive any of the added fees that are charged.

TAXES

The next property tax installment is due on February 9, 2024.

2024 TOWN MEETING

Town Meeting is on March 5, at the Roxbury Town Hall (Village School). The deadline to register to vote is March 5. Deadline for submitting petitions for office is January 29. The number of signatures required of legal voters of Roxbury is 9. Deadline for submitting articles for the Town Meeting Warning is January 18. The number of signatures required of legal voters of Roxbury for the petition is 29.

As a reminder, the Secretary of State's Office encourages voters to use the MY VOTER PAGE, which you can access at <http://mvp.sec.state.vt.us>. There, you can request absentee ballots and keep track of your ballot. You can register to vote online, in person, or via mail. Online registration can be found at <http://olvr.sec.state.vt.us>.


The Absentee Ballot Request form is also on the Town's website. As a reminder, every year a new request needs to be submitted, so if you filled out a form last year for all elections, you will need to fill out a form again this year.

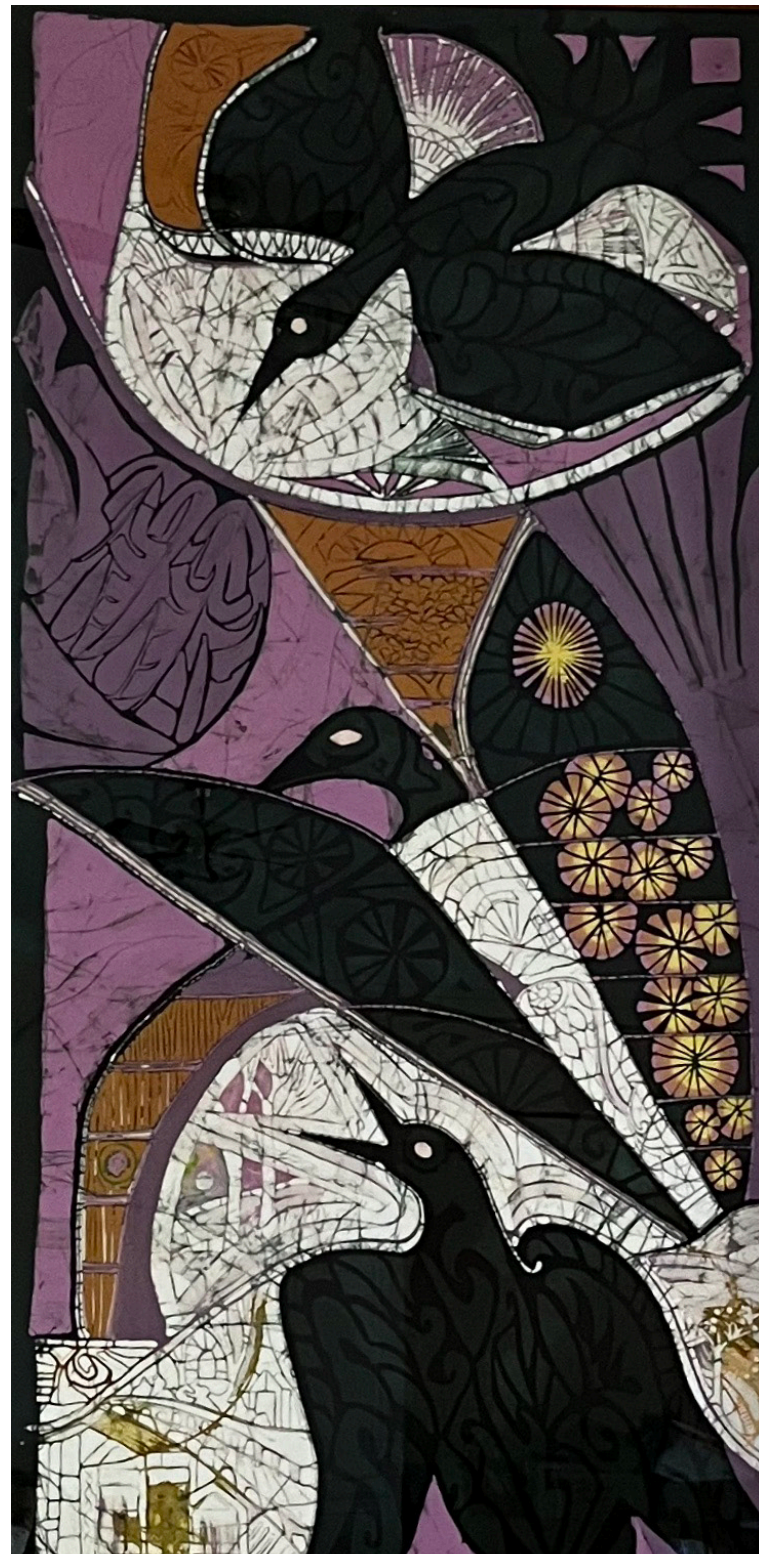
The deadline for requesting an absentee ballot is March 4th at 5pm.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

Town Meeting Day is also Presidential Primary day. As a reminder, you will be asked which ballot you would like (Democrat, Republican, etc). You must state which ballot you want; you will not be able to have all and choose in the booth. Presidential Primary is the only election you have to state which ballot you want. If requesting an Absentee Ballot, you will need to state which ballot you want; you will not be sent all the ballots.

POLLING HOURS

On Town Meeting Day, polls will open at 10am and close at 7pm. The polling location is the Roxbury Town Hall (Roxbury Village School). 



Ascent of the Starling
batik painting by Jane Pincus, gift to the Roxbury Congregational Church

Got a story to tell? We want to hear it!


We want to start a Story Project in Roxbury: the more we share our stories, the more we understand each other. If you have a story to share and would like to put it down in writing, contact Jane Pincus at aggiesmee@tds.net.

Planning Commission

by Elizabeth Carney

The Roxbury Planning Commission became aware of an opportunity to apply for a Municipal Planning Grant in early August, and submitted the application in October. The grant was awarded, fully funded for \$22,500 on December 20, 2023, by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. We would like to thank all the citizens, business owners, and town organizations for the fantastic letters of support that we received, and how important they were to the success of the application being funded!

This grant will provide consultants to assist the Planning Commission and the village center of Roxbury in the areas of physical improvement, which may include pre-engineering water/waste water visioning, housing-related projects, capital programs and plans related to climate resilience, and age-friendly plans for attracting and retaining families, individuals, and seniors. Each of these areas were defined as written by the Planning Commission in the 2021 Town Plan.

In addition to managing the activities pertaining to this grant, the Planning Commission intends to promote support for the retention of the Roxbury Village School. We strongly feel that efforts to attract and retain families, individuals, and seniors would be significantly impacted in a negative manner if the town did not have its own school. Roxbury has always reflected strong support for keeping a school in the village! 

Roxbury Senior Lunches have resumed at the Community Hall and Senior Center on Mondays at noon. Please contact Jack Cashman at 485-8915 to reserve a meal. Watch for menu postings on FPF!

Roxbury Community Supper Schedule
January 26, February 23, March 29
at the Community Hall

Food served 5-7pm


The Newsy always welcomes new contributors. Please let us know if you have anything you'd like to share with the community, and we can get it into the next issue. Send questions and content to librarian@roxburyfreelibrary.org.

Roxbury Democratic Party

Hello Roxbury!


2024 is proving to be a riveting election season. The Roxbury Democratic Party learns and acts through community discussion and engagement. Frustrated by current politics in the news? Come tell us why. It's important to bounce ideas off of one another and talk things through. What are our shared values, and what actions should we take? The goal of this group is to bring perspective to the political discussion.

We are planning quarterly meetings, with our first on February 11th at 5 pm, at the Roxbury Free Library. Please join us!

If you would like more information please contact us at roxburyvtdems@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you there! 


Roxbury Republicans

by Wade Holt

Roxbury has a new Republican caucus. Our first meeting was held on Wednesday, October 11, 2023. We elected officers. Wade Holt was elected chair. John Helfant was elected Vice Chair. Lori Holt was elected Secretary. Mark Gerdes was elected Treasurer. We are planning a potluck for January 12, 2024. Everyone is welcome. We are looking to add new members to the group. Please let me know if you plan to attend or would like to be a part of this group. You can email me at wadeholt1008@gmail.com. We have also started a Facebook page. You can visit and post at "Roxbury Vermont Republican Party." 

Volunteer Fire Department

The Roxbury Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD) conducted an election of officers during a December 17, 2023, meeting. Mike Dickinson will continue serving as Fire Chief, Clarence Baker as Assistant Chief, Don Randall as Secretary, and Tim Martin as Treasurer. Louis Stamatelos was elected to the new position of Training Officer.

As soon as weather cooperates, the RVFD will help fill the community skating rink next to the town office for the winter season. The department has volunteered to deliver town reports in February, in order to save the cost of mailing the reports. This effort is also intended to ensure firefighter awareness of Roxbury residences in case of emergencies. 

MRPS Update (Montpelier-Roxbury Public Schools)

Kristen Getler and Rhett Williams

This year big changes are happening in the world of education funding. The state has changed a formula that determines how districts and unions are funded. That change means more funding will go to districts and unions with more need. This increases the overall funding in the state and focuses that funding in places where there are more students learning English as a second language. Because of the changed formula MRPS will lose funding. Roxbury students do not qualify for increases in funding even though we are in an area with less than 55 people per square mile because we are merged with a more populated city.

As a result of decreased funding for students in MRPS, the district will need to cut millions of dollars from our budget over the next five years. Immediately, the prospect of busing Roxbury elementary students to Union Elementary School became an important avenue for this type of savings. While this will not happen next year, these conversations are bound to continue and there is a strong likelihood the board will initiate a process to close RVS over the next 3 or 4 years.

Meanwhile, many families of students at the middle and high schools are experiencing a lot of frustration with transportation problems, especially when it comes to participation in after-school sports and other activities.

Funding for the RVS after-school program will not be available next year. Currently, there is a possibility the district will adopt a model at RVS that is similar to the program at Union Elementary. The program at UES costs \$99/week (\$90 for siblings). An alternative approach that has been suggested would be to bus students from RVS to Union Elementary School for after-school programming.

Many have asked, “why are we in a partnership with Montpelier and how do we get out of it?” While the questions of *why* should be directed to prior school directors, we can say something about the legal process of withdrawal and merger with a different neighboring district or union. It would start with a petition with signatures from 5% of Roxbury voters and a petition with 5% of Montpelier voters (more than 400 signatures from Montpelier). Committees would be formed including a Roxbury Withdrawal Committee of three members, and a subcommittee of the MRPS board. If studies conclude separation is in the best interest of both towns from educational and financial perspectives, both towns would vote to separate. Any neighboring district or union would need to have votes in each town in that district or union to accept Roxbury into a new partnership.

It is an honor to be a Roxbury member of the Montpelier Roxbury Public School Board of Directors. We are happy to discuss these matters with you, either publicly or privately.
Kristen and Rhett

Kristen Getler (802) 498 8786 (kristengetler@mpsvt.org)
Rhett Williams (802) 324 1180 (rhettwilliams@mpsvt.org) 🏠



A view of the Roxbury Village School, circa 1980s, from Tracy Hill Rd. Photographer unknown.

Select Board Expansion Committee Report

Submitted by C. Sullivan, J. Lusk, and B. Pincus

December 11, 2023

In order to gather data on the benefits and risks of expanding our selectboard size, we sent out a survey to all Vermont town clerks and requested feedback from towns of less than 2,000 people but welcomed responses from all towns. We asked the clerks to forward the survey to select board members, trustees, town administrators and town managers. We sent an additional 88 emails directly to select board members in towns of less than 2,000 residents.

We received results from 51 respondents from 40 different towns. Of those who responded, 33 were selectboard members, 17 were town clerks, and one was a town administrator. More than three-quarters of the respondents were from towns in the 500-2000 range and nearly 55% had a select board of 5 members.

We encourage the Roxbury Select Board and members of the community to read this report thoroughly, including the many descriptive comments of other town officials on the pros and cons of board expansion, to help inform your decisions moving forward. [a summary of the report follows in the next column.]

We hope this information is helpful as we consider the manner in which we all continue to govern and guide our town in these complex times.

Respectfully,

Craig, Judy and Ben 🏠

You can find town documents, meeting agendas and minutes, meeting warnings and town governance information at the official town website:

www.roxburyvt.org

Got a Roxbury-based business? Tell your neighbors about it in the Newsy! There is also a full listing of town businesses on the official town website, <https://roxburyvt.org/roxburyvt-local-businesses/>

Calling all Roxbury Kids !

Tell us what you did this year! Got a story to share? We want your artwork, poetry, photos, and writing to publish in the next Newsy.

Send it to librarian@roxburyfreelibrary.org

Some important takeaways of the Select Board Expansion report include:

- Over 75% of respondents felt that the workload of the select board has increased in the past 10 years.
- The towns that increased their board size generally felt that those changes addressed their needs (78% of respondents believed this was a positive choice, and 1 respondent - 7% - of the total vote - felt like it was a negative choice, with two respondents - 14% - falling in the middle of the scale).
- Positive benefits frequently mentioned include:
 - better distribution of workload
 - more balanced discussion of issues
 - increased diversity of perspective
 - accomplish more work
 - better meeting management
 - increased board cohesion
 - allows for 2 board members to discuss issues outside of meetings which is not allowed by VT open meeting law for 3 member boards
- Negative consequences frequently mentioned include:
 - finding competent, volunteer candidates to fill the positions
 - increased salary costs
 - increased meeting length due to more opinions being expressed
- If a larger select board is not pursued by a town in need of additional services, many respondents suggested establishing more standing committees to help distribute the workload, or a paid town administrator to help the board conduct town business. Most small towns believe that Town managers are too expensive to be considered as an option. 🏠

Red Cross Shelter: The Roxbury Village School is an American Red Cross Emergency Shelter. The school now has a generator, which makes the building a great resource in case of an emergency. We have cots, blankets, and dried food stored at the shelter.

Tina Young is the coordinator, and can be reached at tinayoung@mpsvt.org or 262-1506. Please contact her if you would like to be added to the list of volunteers.

Roxbury Food Shelf: We are asking individuals in need of food to please contact Claire Chomentowski at (802) 485-7779. She will let you know how food may be picked up or, if necessary, delivered.