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Back to back storms causing plowing issues, non-injury accidents in Farmington

By Ann Bryant
Staff Writer

FARMINGTON — Patience is a must for drivers and pedestrians alike during this week or more of back to back storms.

Snowplows, whether town or private, are struggling with “no place to put anything more,” Tim “TD” Hardy of Hardy’s Lawn Care which also does plowing, said. “Everyone’s tired of it.”

Along with placement of snow, Farmington Public Works is also facing extended work hours and sidewalk equipment that is not working.

With the arrival of two leased Skid Steer machines, the uncleared sidewalks that are causing pedestrians to walk on narrow town roads will be cleared within the next few days, Philip Hutchins, Public Works director, said Wednesday.

The town currently owns two Holder machines to clear

nearly 10-miles of sidewalks. They are often used by cities and larger municipalities. “But, they are not working well for the outskirts and mileage we need to cover here,” he said.

Over the last month, the department has invested about \$5,000 in new parts to try to repair the issues but still cannot find the problem, he said.

“It is a complex machine,” he said.

There are few trained mechanics and none are available locally for the Canadian built machine. Even help from customer support has not helped.

The town purchased one of the Holder units three years ago for \$125,000. There are still two payments owed but the warranty ran out in 2016.

One rental Skid Steer arrived Tuesday night from New York, he said. A John Deere dealer, Nortrax of Westbrook, arranged to have the machine



ANN BRYANT/SUN MEDIA GROUP

The sidewalks on Academy Street, as viewed from Main Street, are filled in with snow because Farmington Public Works is struggling with sidewalk equipment that is not working and over a week of back to back storms.

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Ex-treasurer pleads guilty to stealing \$306,000 from Farmington food closet



Mary O'Donal of Farmington

By Donna M. Perry
Staff Writer

FARMINGTON — The ex-treasurer of the Care and Share Food Closet in Farmington pleaded guilty Tuesday to stealing \$306,000 from the nonprofit organization over a period of nearly 10 years.

Mary O'Donal, 74, of Farmington was the sole handler of finances for the organization from the 1970s until she resigned in November 2015. The embezzlement began in the early 2000s, according to officials.

O'Donal spoke softly as she entered her guilty plea to a charge of Class B theft

by unauthorized taking or transfer. Her attorney, Christopher Berryment, was by her side in Franklin County Superior Court.

The maximum punishment for a conviction on a Class B crime is up to 10 years in prison, Justice Robert Mullen said. The maximum fine is \$20,000.

Under a negotiated plea agreement, the sentence is proposed at three years with all but 30 days suspended, Assistant District Attorney Claire Andrews told the court.

Sentencing is set for March 9.

As part of the agreement, O'Donal is required to deed

her house to the Care and Share Food Closet on Fairbanks Road and enter into an occupancy agreement to live in the house, Andrews said.

She also must pay \$291,000 in restitution, she said. Another stipulation is that she not act in any financial capacity for any nonprofit organization.

O'Donal returned \$15,000 of the missing money to Farmington Police Detective Marc Bowering while he was conducting an investigation into a discrepancy of funds at the closet.

If the case had gone to trial, closet Executive Director Leiza Hiltz Scerbo, who was new to the job in 2015, was

prepared to testify she discovered discrepancies while reviewing the closet's financial records. After making that discovery, she went to the Franklin County District Attorney's Office to speak to state prosecutors. They contacted Bowering to look into the missing funds.

Hiltz Scerbo would have testified that no account information or paper records could initially be obtained, and that some information was missing, Andrews said. O'Donal closed the checking account when she resigned.

Multiple checks were discovered to be made out to

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Farmington board accepts forfeit assets

By Ann Bryant
Staff Writer

FARMINGTON — The Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed Tuesday to accept a state grant and drug forfeiture assets for the Farmington Police Department.

The department will keep 20 firearms and a 2006 Honda Accord confiscated during a drug arrest in July 2016, Police Chief Jack Peck said.

The vehicle was stopped by police as it returned to

Farmington from an out-of-state trip to purchase heroin, he said. An estimated \$8,000 worth of heroin was being brought here every week, he said.

Police found 40 grams of heroin in the car and the driver had a loaded handgun. During a search of the driver's house, 20 firearms were found, he said.

The department will use what guns they can and may trade some for firearms, he said. Some may be destroyed. No guns will be sold to the public.

The car could be used for surveillance, he said. The department has an unmarked Chevrolet Impala for that purpose.

The Board of Selectmen also accepted a \$13,143

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Celebrating the opening of Beaver Lodge

By Ann Bryant
Staff Writer

FARMINGTON — The Beaver Lodge, a newly renovated snack shop, at the University of Maine at Farmington was officially opened Tuesday.

UMF President Kathryn Foster acknowledged the Valentine Day ceremonial ribbon cutting.

“I hope someday people from UMF will look back and say I found my love and partner in the Beaver Lodge at UMF,” she said.

The new lounge offers plenty of room for socializing, a Natural smoothie and juice bar, a new kitchen serving items such as sandwiches and grilled food and a small convenience-type space where students can buy cans of soup, sandwiches, chips and beverages.

The Beaver Lodge actual-



ANN BRYANT/SUN MEDIA GROUP

University of Maine at Farmington President Kathryn A. Foster prepares to cut a ceremonial ribbon Tuesday in celebration of the re-opening of the Snacking Bar, now known as Beaver Lodge, in the Student Center. Pictured on left are students waiting to purchase items, Dan Roy, Sodexo regional director; Foster; Adam Vigue, Sodexo general manager; and Jeff McKay, director of facilities management at UMF.

ly opened on Feb. 6 and has already become a favorite among students.

“It is a great improvement,” James Mahar, a student enjoying lunch, said. “It

is much different from last

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RSU 9 approves more nonunion raises

By Donna M. Perry
Staff Writer

FARMINGTON — Regional School Unit 9 directors, in a weighted vote, approved raises for some nonunion employees Tuesday, Superintendent Tom Ward said Wednesday. The average of the raises is 2 percent, he said. The vote included accepting the Contract Resolution Committee's recommendations on compensation.

Among the employees included are the school psychologist and business manager, social workers, technology technicians and occupational and physical therapists. The contracts are from July 1, 2016, to June 30. The superintendent and Leanne Condon, assistant superintendent/director of curriculum, chose not to receive raises, Ward said. Voting in favor of the raises were Tami Labul and Scott Erb, both of

Farmington; Angela LeClair, Keith Swett, and Cherieann Harrison, all of Wilton; Chairwoman Jennifer Zweig Hebert of Starks; Vice Chairwoman Betsey Hyde of Temple; Jennifer Pooler of New Sharon; and Helen Wilkey of Vienna. Opposed were Craig Stickney of Chesterville, Robert Patterson of Industry and Ryan Morgan of Farmington, Ward said. Absent were Nancy Crosby of Weld, Richard Hargreaves of New Vine-

yard and Doug Dunlap of Farmington. Iris Silverstein of Farmington was at the meeting but had to leave before the executive session when the raises were discussed. The board approved raises for nonunion nutritional staff and nonunion Central Office staff on Jan. 31. Those groups did not include administrators. In other business, Ward announced the retirements of Debbie Farley, art teacher at Mt. Blue Campus; Lawrence Loring, fourth-

grade teacher at Cascade Brook School; and Patricia Blanchard, education technician III at Mallett School. The retirements are effective at the end of the school year. Mt. Blue Campus is losing both of its art teachers, Ward said. The retirement of campus art teacher Roger Bisailon was announced on Jan. 31. "We will miss them all," Ward said of those retiring. dperry@sunmediagroup.net



DONNA M. PERRY/ SUN MEDIA GROUP
RSU 9 Superintendent Tom Ward

LODGE

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year ... a massive amount. There are more food options." Mahar and Tristan Huntoon shared a table as lunch time approached. Huntoon agreed the change from last semester "is great." The renovated snack bar was enlarged into the former space of the UMF Bookstore. Sodexo, the new campus food service, undertook the \$2 million renovation in early November and is paying for it. Everything is new from the kitchen to furniture, two fireplaces, numerous Smart televisions that can be used as computer monitors and self-order computers where students can select what they want. "It has been going well, really busy," Adam Vigue, So-

dexo general manager, said. The smoothies are made with all natural fruit, no bases, no supplements, he said. Frozen fruit provides the texture. Already a hit, in about a week's time which counted two snow days, the smoothie bar has already sold over one thousand smoothies, he said. This is the first natural smoothie bar on University of Maine system campuses served by Sodexo. "We looked at it from a health and wellness point," Dan Roy, regional director, said of the reason. "We also looked at the type of students at UMF. There is a heavy female population here. We thought juice, smoothies, healthy salads and sandwiches would speak to the students at UMF." The bar provides an alternative to grilled, comfort foods. "We wanted to give students that alternative,"



Audrey Gidman, Sodexo employee, takes an order at the juice, smoothie counter in the newly renovated Snack Bar, now known as the Beaver Lodge, in the Student Center at the University of Maine at Farmington.

Roy said. The improved Beaver Lodge, the name chosen by students, is one of the first steps in a recently revealed 20-year master plan for the UMF campus. abryant@sunmediagroup.net

BRIEFLY

Library to show 'Peak Oil'
CARRABASSETT VALLEY — Carrabassett Valley Public Library will show "Peak Oil — A Love Story Date" at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, in the Begin Family Community Room. Artist and Peak Oil activist and Skowhegan art teacher, Iver Lofving, spreads his message of energy apocalypse. He believes that when the Earth reaches its peak of oil production, the collapse of civilization will follow — or not. Will people listen?
CV library to show 'Finding Dory'
CARRABASSETT — Carrabassett Valley Public Library will host a family movie matinee at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 22, in the Begin Family Community Room. Those attending should bring their own snacks.
Star Teachings of TEA
TURNER — A community gathering of Star Teachings of TEA dedicated to practicing kindness will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 19, at Bear Mountain Botanicals, 419 Turner Center Road, Route 117. The gathering is in circle format, where everyone is invited to share their stories, wisdom and questions in the space of openness and receiving.
Children's Festival Feb. 18
FARMINGTON — The

Franklin County Children's Task Force will hold its annual Children's Festival from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, at the North Dining Hall in the UMF student center. The Children's Festival is an opportunity for families to break up the winter blues and get out and enjoy a day of free activities. The Task Force offers a low cost food court. There are activities in the hands-on room, such as face painting, games and crafts. The ever-popular cookie decorating will be back for the little ones. The Gross Motor room will have fun stuff available. And there be quiet corners to read a book with a child. In addition, C.H.I.P.S. will show a brief video and take fingerprints for child identification. FMI: fcctf.org, [facebook.com/FCCTaskForce/](https://www.facebook.com/FCCTaskForce/).
Journalism education scholarship offered
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS — The Journalism Education Foundation of New England will award \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors and college students in New England who plan to pursue a career in journalism. The deadline for applications is March 3. FMI, apply: tinyurl.com/ztpa5q6.

SeniorsPlus satellite office hours
FARMINGTON — SeniorsPlus will hold office hours for its satellite office location at 218 Fairbanks Rd in Farmington. Office hours for scheduled appointments will be from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays. Visitors will need to call 1-800-427-1241 to schedule an appointment. Walk-in hours will be held from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month. Staff will be on hand to answer any questions or concerns community members may have about services and resources for older adults and adults with disabilities and their families. These services are free and open to the public.
Farmington's Winter Farmers Market
FARMINGTON — Farmington's Winter Farmers Market will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays through the end of April at the Farmington Grange Hall, 124 Bridge St. FMI: 207-778-6637.
Livermore Falls church serving monthly community lunches
LIVERMORE FALLS — The Emmanuel Assembly of God serves monthly community lunches with soup and salads from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

on the second Saturday of the month at the American Legion Hall, 17 Reynolds Ave.
Scholarship for UMS, MMA students
ORONO — University Credit Union has announced the second year of its scholarship program. The program will award eight \$1,000 scholarships to students beginning their studies in the fall 2017 semester at one of the seven University of Maine System campuses or Maine Maritime Academy. The eight \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to a student at each of the following schools: University of Maine, University of Maine Augusta, University of Maine Farmington, University of Maine Fort Kent, University of Maine Machias, University of Maine Presque Isle, University of Southern Maine and Maine Maritime Academy. The deadline to apply for the scholarship is May 1, 2017. Scholarship winners will be notified by May 19, 2017. FMI, apply: ucm.maine.edu.
Essay contest topic announced
SKOWHEGAN — The Margaret Chase Smith Library has announced that the topic of its 21st annual essay

contest is drug abuse. As far back as 1951, Sen. Smith warned that "one of the great threats to our country today is the preying of narcotic peddlers upon our children." Since the 1980s, the nation has waged a war on drugs with mixed results. The Margaret Chase Smith Library invites Maine high school seniors to propose how they would address the current lethal drug epidemic. Entries are due by April 1 and decisions will be announced on May 1. Prizes are \$50 for five honorable mentions, \$250 for third place, \$500 for second place, and \$1,000 for first place. FMI: mcslibrary.org/program/edu/essay.htm; 207-474-7133.
Fresh Air Fund seeks host families
NEW YORK — The Fresh Air Fund is seeking central Maine families to host New York City children. Each summer, thousands of children visit suburban, rural and small town communities along the East Coast, from North Carolina to Maine and Canada, through The Fresh Air Fund's Friendly Towns Program. Since 1877, The Fresh Air Fund, an independent nonprofit, has provided free summer experiences to more than 1.8 million New York City children from low-income communities. Fresh Air children are boys and girls from ages seven to 18 who live in New York City. Children who are re-invited by host families may continue with The Fresh Air Fund through age 18 and can enjoy extended trips. FMI: 207-931-8889, freshair.org.
Phillips Community Church annual meeting
PHILLIPS — The Phillips Community Church will hold its annual meeting at noon Sunday, Feb. 19, at the Community House, beginning with a potluck meal. FMI, submit: 207-639-2012.
Beat the Winter Blues Brunch
FAYETTE — The third annual Beat the Winter Blues Brunch will be served from 9:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 18, at Starling Hall, 2769 Main St. Proceeds will benefit the Starling Hall renovation and move. Cost: \$6 per adult; \$3 per child; \$20 for a family of six or more. FMI: starlinghall.friends@gmail.com

Gold LEAF Senior College kickoff
FARMINGTON — The Gold LEAF Institute Senior College at University of Maine Farmington will kickoff of its spring term on Wednesday, Feb. 22, at the UMF Olsen Student Center, North Dining Hall, 111 South St. The program will run from 3 to 4 p.m.; course registrations will take place from 4 to 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. Gold LEAF is a member-run organization that promotes lifelong learning. Membership is open to anyone 50 or older, and to their spouses/partners regardless of age. FMI: 207-778-7063, goldleaf@maine.edu, goldleaf.wikispaces.com.
Public ham supper at Masonic Hall
WILTON — There will be a ham public supper from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, at the Harland M. Harneden Masonic Hall, 70 Bryant Rd. Cost: \$8 for adults; \$5 children younger than 12. FMI: 207-778-2354.
Chesterville Homemakers to meet
CHESTERVILLE — The North Chesterville Extension Homemakers will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 28, in the Chesterville Town Office on the Dutch Gap Road. Glenda Barker will lead the group in finalizing the plans for the Free Senior Citizen St. Patrick's Day Luncheon and making the table favors. The public may attend. FMI: 207-778-3156.
'Titcomb Family Memories' at FHS
FARMINGTON — Farmington Historical Society will meet Monday, Feb. 27, at North Church, 118 High St. A potluck and short meeting will begin at 6 p.m. followed by the month's program, "Titcomb Family Memories." It will feature descendants of Hat Titcomb's family recalling memories of "Greenacres" and the "Titcomb House," now the Farmington Historical Society museum. Everyone is welcome.
Henderson Memorial Baptist Church dinner
FARMINGTON — Henderson Memorial Baptist Church will serve a New England boiled dinner from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Saturday, March 4. Cost: \$8.

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