

November 2023

HALIFAX NEWS

Visit with the Fire Chief

– Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont

Fire Chief Dennis Annear visited the Halifax Café (in the Halifax Community Hall at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax) on October 21 to talk about fire safety and answer our questions. Dennis got started at about 11 o'clock and people were still chatting with him as we began closing the Café at 1 pm. I took notes and will try to convey to you some of what Chief Annear covered.



Fall's "fire" on Hanson Road

The Halifax Fire Company is all-volunteer. It receives some support from the Town of Halifax but raises most of its operating budget through fundraisers—the Firemen's Auction and the Firemen's Clam Bake—and donations. Dennis commented that people in Halifax are very generous to their fire department.

As of Saturday, October 21, Halifax Fire Company had answered 78 calls including mutual aid, a call where Halifax Fire goes to another town to help their fire company. Most calls are medical: a person is unwell or injured and needs help. Some calls are brush fires or chimney fires or involve vehicles. Some are response to a faulty alarm or result in Halifax Fire Company being turned back before arriving on the scene of a mutual aid call, if the situation has been handled.

Problems the Halifax Fire Company is coping with include equipment shortages and communications. The nearest radio tower for contact with the dispatcher is in Whitingham. Few firemen have mobile radio communications. Once they leave the fire station or their home, firemen are relying on their cell phones. To find the scene of a call, they use their personal knowledge and good house number signs. Halifax, like most communities, has adopted the 911 address system. In the 911 system, your house number tells you how far your house is from the beginning of your road, where the beginning is determined by the town government and the

increment is one 1000th of a mile. Living at 1513 Hanson Road means the entrance to my driveway is about 1.513 miles from Collins Road. Also, odd numbers are on the left and even numbers are on the right, as the numbers increase.

How do the firemen find your house in the dark? Often the mapping on a smartphone will not work on our rural roads. A good way to help them is to get a **reflective blue house number sign** from the Halifax Fire Company. The number sign by itself is \$20; the number sign with a post is \$30. The Halifax Fire Company will bring it to your house and install it. Call 802-368-7733 or email Dennis.Annear@gmail.com to order your house number sign. You can also download the order form from <https://czresearch.com/fire/>.

Equipment for our firefighters is absolutely essential but also very expensive. A pair of boots is \$450. Coat and pants run over \$1000. A helmet is \$500. Gloves are \$100. This is equipment that every firefighter needs, but the Fire Company can only replace about two sets of old equipment per year. The trucks are also critical equipment, with one from the 1980's and two from the 1990's. Their maintenance is provided expertly and at a huge

discount by Dave Briggs. It would be hard for Halifax Fire Company to buy a new truck: those are going for \$850,000 and up.

October is fire safety month, but your house should be fire-safe every day. To avoid chimney fires, Dennis recommended getting your chimney cleaned at least once a year, and burning hot to prevent creosote build-up. (Creosote is a by-product of burning wood that can build up in your chimney and block it as well as catch on fire.) Another helpful habit is to include some poplar in your firewood, as it helps burn off creosote. Finally, be sure your chimney is in good repair. If your chimney is rusting, replace it with a good quality chimney designed for wood stoves and fireplaces. Dennis also talked about Tesla roof shingles. These shingles replace regular shingles; they capture solar energy without adding the weight of add-on solar panels. Similarly, metal roofing with thin-film photovoltaics (PV) on it lets you capture solar energy without adding much weight or changing your roof profile.

The Halifax Fire Company recently completed training to deal with EV cars. EV batteries can catch fire. When one does, the car is totaled. If your EV catches fire, for one thing, get out of the car immediately! That battery burns at 2800°F. Call 911 from a safe distance. The battery is sandwiched between the rocker panel on the bottom of your car’s chassis and a shield panel above the battery. It would take 20,000 to 30,000 gallons of water to put out a burning EV battery, but the fire company cannot get the water to the encased battery. So the best thing to do is to let it burn.

New materials bring new hazards to firefighting. Synthetic materials are in your sofa, your curtains, even in your plumbing—including pipes and shower stalls. Copper pipes didn’t burn but PVC can. Burning plastics like these also produces toxic smoke that poses a danger to firefighters and other emergency personnel on the scene. Chief Dennis Annear has been a firefighter for 47 years. He has a lot more information he can share. If you have questions, you can contact him at Dennis.Annear@gmail.com.

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TOWN NEWS

Open House Retirement Party for Lewis Sumner. Join us in honoring Lewis Sumner for his 50+ years of service to the Town of Halifax.

Note new date!!!

Date: Saturday, November 4, 2023, from 12:00 - 3:00pm.

Note new date!!!

Place: Halifax School Multi-Purpose Room.

Come prepared to share a favorite story. For more details, please call 802-368-7390 or 802-368-7160.



SENIOR MEAL IN HALIFAX – November 17th is the next senior meal in Halifax serving at 12 noon at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax. Menu: turkey pot pie (turkey, potato, veggies) with biscuits and a dessert. All seniors are welcome. Free-will price \$3.00 for age 60 years and up, \$4.00 for under age 60. Hope to see you there. A call to Joan is appreciated 802-368-7733. – Joan Courser

RABBIT NEWS. The Vermont Daily Chronicle published a notice that **rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus** has been found in nearby states and may show up in Vermont. Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department asks that you notify them if you find a dead rabbit without an obvious cause of death. While not dangerous to humans, the virus is highly contagious to hares and rabbits including pet rabbits. The disease is considered an “emerging risk.” More info:
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/rhdv2.pdf
<https://vermontdailychronicle.com/rabbit-hunters-beware/>



CEMETERY NEWS. The Halifax Cemetery Commission had heard rumors that some areas had been bulldozed in Halifax Center Cemetery. Unmarked graves might explain the strange pattern of blank areas in the old cemetery. So a company that uses ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to find unmarked graves was hired. Imagine our surprise when 130 unmarked graves were revealed! Consistent with Vermont statutes, we have marked each grave with a small granite block flush with the ground. If we learn someone’s identity, we will replace the granite block with a marker showing the person’s name and dates, as available. Now the Commission is contemplating other cemeteries where GPR might be revealing.

At right: a slate headstone from Pennel Hill Cemetery reads, “In memory of Mr. John Pennel who was killed by the f[all] of a tree June 23d 1793 in the 35th year of his age. *Why should we mourn repine & say, The flower too soon it fades, When death’s cold stream conveys away, ... to silent shades.*”



BEAVER NEWS—DECEIVING BEAVERS by Patti Smith. Beavers are built for the water, and they can't live without it. That is why they are so dedicated to building dams to keep water in place. As beavers move upstream and down creating new ponds. Areas they leave behind become meadows and shrublands. These are important habitats for many plants and animals, from moose to mink. Because of these activities, beavers are considered a "keystone" species—one that is essential for other species to thrive. Alas for beavers and road crews, the easiest place to make a dam is across a culvert.



Road surface – just above the water level

I got a phone call in mid-September last year; beavers had completely blocked a big culvert on Hatch School Road and the water was rising. I work for the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, and we often assist with beaver conflicts. Our part is usually easy. We call Skip Lisle. Skip is a biologist who has dedicated his career to solving beaver problems in ways that allow beavers and their habitats to remain in place. He builds custom devices to suit each site. He has been learning from beavers for over 30 years, and it’s rare that the beavers outsmart him. If they do, Skip comes back until he figures it out.

Most road budgets don’t contain a line item for deceiving beavers. In some towns, beavers are killed whenever they start blocking culverts. Since culverts are attractive sites for beavers to dam, these places become death traps. Beavers are killed whenever they arrive, leaving upstream areas devoid of ponds and wetlands. Other towns install grates across the culverts and use backhoes to clear them. That’s not cheap. In the case of the Hatch School Road culvert, some Halifax neighbors stepped in and offered to hire Skip to protect it.

Since I live near Hatch School Road, I met Skip at the site. The first thing we needed to do was remove the culvert blockage. I say “we.” Whenever I have worked with Skip, it’s mostly a matter of staying out of his way and watching in amazement. After decades of work, he is good at what he does, but he also has been overendowed with strength and speed. Skip headed into the culvert with his cultivating fork and began tearing the dam apart while I dragged the freed debris downstream. Within a couple of hours, the culvert was cleared.

Now for the outsmarting. The basic components of a culvert protector are a rugged fence that keeps the beavers out and a pipe through the fence that goes a distance upstream. At the upstream end is a cage that keeps



debris out of the pipe. Beavers can dam around the culvert fence, but water continues to flow through the pipe, regulating how deep the water can get based on where the pipe is set.

At this site, the beavers had another dam and a nice pond upstream from the culvert. Skip decided to build a deceiver that would discourage the beavers from damming anywhere near the culvert. I couldn't help Skip with the construction, so I just returned to admire the finished product. The area around the culvert was a mudflat, but just upstream Skip saw a bittern take flight. We walked up to admire the beavers' lodge and the beautiful pond.



This year, BEEC received funding to help solve beaver problems and support a Halifax Beaver Working Group. A few events have taken place already. The next one will be on Sunday, November 5, when all are invited to the Hatch School Road site to meet Skip, learn how beaver deceivers work, and then explore the beaver pond and see how the beavers are preparing for winter. We will meet at the Todd residence, 273 Hatch School Road, at 2 pm.

Skip will also be installing a new device at a problem site on Jacksonville Stage Road. The Halifax Beaver Working Group will let you know when that is in operation. Updates: <https://www.beec.org/halifax-beaver/>
Questions? Email patti@beec.org

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS. I am pleased to see the birds returning.....slowly.....I have seen two Chickadees, one White-Breasted Nuthatch, one Junco, about a dozen Sparrows each day, a Tree Sparrow, a Chipping Sparrow, a Field Sparrow, and a White-Throated Sparrow who has headed for warmer pastures (as I have not seen it in a few days). I still have two male and female Cardinals, a few Blue Jays, one Mourning Dove. I hear the Crows but do not see them at the feeders; I saw one Titmouse, a couple of Blackbirds, and a Purple Finch.

ELSEWHERE AROUND TOWN. Up on Hanson Road the grey fox visits at dusk, turkeys abound, we hear a buck snorting and coyotes howling. We see blue jays, Canada geese, common yellowthroat warblers, chickadees, the broad-winged hawk (once being chased by ravens!), purple finches, pileated woodpeckers, golden-crowned kinglets, crows, ravens, chipmunks, squirrels (red & grey), and a few centipedes. In the woods and cemeteries, where we are digging up stones to reset them, there are many red-backed salamanders.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

September 2 there was a call on Hanson Road for a person with severe pain on their right side; Deerfield Valley ambulance responded.

September 3 two trucks and eight men responded to a transformer fire on Collins Road. Two trucks and eight men responded to a barn fire in Colrain. Sadly, they lost 3 pigs and a tractor. This was a mutual aid call.

September 9 four men responded to Hall Road for a man with chest pain Deerfield Whitingham firemen and Valley ambulance responded, the man was transported.

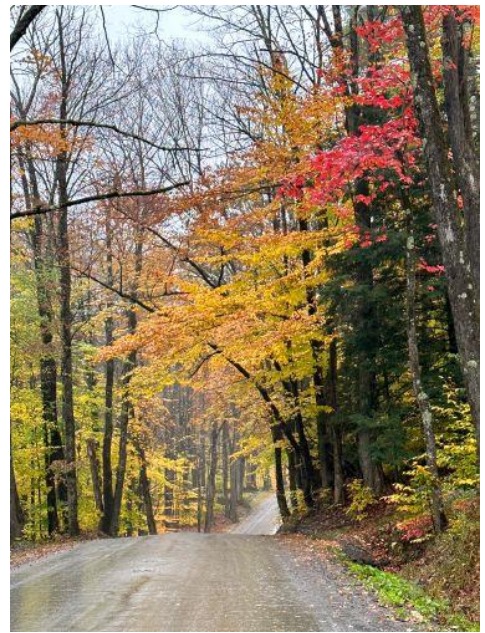
September 21 four men and the ambulance responded to Larrabee Road for severe back pain. The man was transported to Brattleboro hospital.

September 21 Deerfield Valley ambulance and Whitingham rescue responded to a call at Halifax school; all refused transport. The scene was cleared by Vermont State Police.

September 21 five men responded to a call on Collins Road for a ruptured blood blister.

September 24 two men responded to a lifeline call. There was no problem; it was an accidental hit on the lifeline button.
 October 6 two men responded to an alarm sounding at Halifax Falls. There was no fire.
 October 14 two men responded to Hanson Road for a person on the floor that needed help getting up.
 October 14 two men and one truck responded to Colrain, MA, to ‘cover’ their station.
 October 15 two men responded to an unresponsive 94-year-old who was transported to hospital.
 October 24 five men responded to possible unresponsive person on Stage Road; there was no transport; the person was sleeping.
 October 25 seven men and one truck responded to Wilmington to ‘cover’ their fire station as they had a house fire on Ray Hill Road. No one was home at the time, but sadly a dog lost its life at the residence.

Burn Permits are Required – call before you burn. Dennis (802) 368-7809 or Malcolm (802) 368-2484



A rainy afternoon with fall colors on Hatch School Road

CAFÉ EVENTS. Talk with our school principal, Sandy Pentak-Cohen, on Saturday, Nov. 11, from 11 am to 1 pm at the Halifax Café (20 Brook Road in West Halifax). This is your chance to find out her thoughts on kids and curriculum and the past 10 years in Halifax while sipping coffee or nibbling a snack.

HALIFAX HISTORICAL SOCIETY. The new year is coming, and the Halifax Historical Society is taking action! Over the fall season we put the word out to all our fellow residents to submit their photos of Halifax they were proud of. We are excitedly in the works of selecting 12 beautiful photos to create a **2024 Calendar**. We have received amazing pictures of all seasons, and it makes it so difficult to choose! Once we submit our photos to the printer and receive them in the mail they will be up for sale! **Only \$15 for a 2024 Halifax Calendar** created by our community.

Support your historical society!
 Buy a Halifax Calendar!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at HalifaxVtHistoricalSociety@gmail.com



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**Send check made out to “Newsletter” to
 P O Box 27**

West Halifax VT 05358.

NEWSLETTER STORIES – Got a Halifax story? Send to Laurel LaurelACopeland@gmail.com or Joan JWCinVt@gmail.com (PO Box 27, 05358).

Halifax News

NOVEMBER 2023

CALENDAR

- Nov. 2** (Thursday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Nov. 4 (Saturday): **Lewis Sumner Party at the School.** (Halifax Café is closed.)
Nov. 5 (Sunday): **Beaver Deceivers** by Skip Lisle @273 Hatch School Rd 2:00 – 4:00 pm.
Nov. 9 (Thursday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Nov. 11 (Saturday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. **Talk with the Principal 11-1.**
Nov. 16 (Thursday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Nov. 18 (Saturday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Nov. 23 (Thursday): Café closed for Thanksgiving
Nov. 25 (Saturday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Nov. 30 (Thursday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Dec. 2 (Saturday): **Halifax Holiday Craft Fair** at the School (9:00 AM to 4:00 PM).
Dec. 2 (Saturday): Halifax Café open 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.
Dec. 2 (Saturday): 2:00-5:00 pm: **Wrap Fest!** Free wrapping paper, snacks, and fun in the Hall, Shop at the **Halifax Holiday Craft Fair** at the school (9 AM to 4 PM) then come to the Hall to wrap your gifts (2 to 5 PM)! Bring tape and your holiday spirit.

Editor: LaurelACopeland@gmail.com. Email me for free color e-version.

Archives: <https://czresearch.com/newsletter>

– Notices Around Town –



Halifax Community Hall
20 Brook Rd, West Halifax

Holiday WRAPPING PARTY

2 DEC '23
Saturday from 2-5pm

20 Brook Rd, West Halifax
Bring your own tape | Donate a canned good | Cocoa and treats for sale

Contact Laurel at
LaurelACopeland@gmail.com or
Pam at 802-451-9593



Happy Holidays

HALIFAX HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

December 2, 2023
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Halifax Elementary School
Multi-purpose room

Get some last-minute holiday shopping done
With our LOCAL ARTISANS!!!

Come for lunch!!

If you're interested in selling your wares
Send me an E-mail at: Tblaiser2@gmail.com
Or Call the Halifax Town Office
802/368-7390
Vendor applications also available at the Halifax Town Office