

# REPORTER

Brandon • Pittsford • Proctor •

Lake Dunmore, Leicester, Whiting, Sud

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RUTLAND NORTHEAST SU  
ATTN: JEANNE COLLINS  
49 COURT DR  
BRANDON VT 05783-8407

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

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## School budgets pass easily during a challenging year

### Newcomer Steen wins OVUU seat; Mathis, Bernhardt are re-elected

BY LEE J. KAHRS

**BRANDON/CHITTENDEN** — Both local school budgets passed on Town Meeting Day here, a relief for school officials, teachers and students alike after a year of pandemic-related challenges.

The Otter Valley Unified Union School 2021-22 budget was approved by voters 1,252-960. The \$20,970,189 spending plan includes a 3.25%, or \$662,000, increase in spending. Of that increase, \$489,000 relates to salaries and benefits. Per the current union agreement that includes a 4% salary increase.

OVUU serves students in Brandon, Pittsford, Leicester, Whiting, Goshen and Sudbury. The Barstow Unified Union School District budget, which

Supervisory Union and serves Chittenden, also passed, 351-203. The Barstow budget increased by \$258,692, or about 5.19% over last year, with spending per equalized pupil being up 3.94%. The increase is due to a rise in the number of high school students in the district to nine. The district has school choice for high school students, meaning it pays tuition to students attending high school.

Brenda Fleming, director of business and finance at Barstow, said this budget proposes spending \$17,114 per equalized pupil. The statewide average is expected to be \$17,612.

Rutland, Northeast Supervisory Union Superintendent Jeanne Collins said when the

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by the district board in January, she was hoping to garner voter interest in a budget that had no big takeaways. On Tuesday evening, Collins said she was grateful to the voters who passed the school spending plans this year in particular.

"I am very pleased that the Otter Valley and Barstow budgets passed," Collins said. "The support of our communities has been astounding over this past difficult year. Our partnership with the community has been wonderful and the budget vote affirmed that we are headed in the right direction. We are well primed to return to full time next year, if the pandemic conditions allow."

Rutland Northeast has been operating on a hybrid education model where students are either doing fully remote learning from home during the COVID pandemic, or are in school two to four days a week,

depending on grade level.

## SCHOOL BOARD SEATS

In the only contested race on the OVUU school board, challenger Natalie Steen beat incumbent Barry Varian by less than a hundred votes, 917- 821.

Bill Mathis was re-elected to the Goshen seat on the Otter Valley Unified Union School Board. Mathis is the former longtime superintendent of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union and runs a private educational consulting business. He also serves on the Vermont State Board of Education.

Greg Bernhardt of Leicester was re-elected to a three-year at-large seat on the OVUU Board. Another at-large seat remains vacant.

In Barstow, B. Hummel and Ethan Bodin won their board seats. The open seat was not filled.

Melanie Munroe was elected Board Clerk and Sara Tully was elected as District Treasurer. The school moderator position remains open.



## Positive polling

**BRANDON POLL WORKER Marge Munger, right, helps voter Robert Marcette with his ballot on Town Meeting Day.**

Photo by Lee Kahrs