

# The REPORTER

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## RNESU supt. search comes up empty

"It's back to square one," Bertrand says

BY ANGELO LYNN

BRANDON — The search for a new superintendent at RNESU to replace retiring Supt. Jeanné Collins will take a hiatus of several weeks after the preferred candidate in an initial search declined RNESU's offer.

The Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union School Board had offered the superintendent position to Zach McLaughlin last Friday, but over the weekend Dr. McLaughlin declined the position to take another position.

Board chair Laurie Bertrand said the board wants to pursue a thoughtful and deliberate process in its choice of a new superintendent and to that end will put the search on hiatus until after a new board meets following Town Meeting Day. Bertrand said it was likely that the new board would form a

## Pittsford board nears selection of town manager

PITTSFORD — For the past several meetings, the Pittsford selectboard has been reviewing applicants for its new town manager. Current Town Manager John Haverstock announced several months ago that he would be retiring shortly after Town Meeting Day 2022.

The board has interviewed several candidates and has scheduled a special meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 9 to discuss the town's town manager recruitment efforts in an executive session starting shortly after the meeting commences at 5:30 p.m. The public can attend the meeting in person or via zoom by tuning into the Zoom meeting ID 652 103 6395.

(See Pittsford selectboard, Page 15)

## Barn Opera stages Valentine special

Comic opera, Don Pasquale, set for Feb. 11th-12th

BRANDON — The Barn Opera of Brandon will be staging a romantic comic opera just ahead of Valentine's Day this coming Friday and Saturday, Feb. 11-12. A three-act opera in Italian, Don Pasquale is Gaetano Donizetti's classic comedy written in 1843 and modified to fit today's stage and audience by Brandon's Joshua Collier and his team at Barn Opera.

The plot is classic comedic opera.

Relationships and marriage take work in the best of situations, but in Don Pasquale's case, and when the marriage is out of spite, it could prove to be a bit much for an old man rich man who marries a much younger woman in an attempt to eliminate his nephew from his will. He had refused to allow Ernesto (the nephew) to marry his lover Norina, in his hope to leave Ernesto penniless.

Little does Pasquale know, however, that the person he enlists to help him find a bride is Malatesta, a friend to both Ernesto and Norina. When Malatesta suggests his "sister" as a potential bride, Pasquale is overjoyed. However, the sweet, demure,



BRANDON'S BARN OPERA will present the Italian comic opera Don Pasquale this Friday and Saturday, Feb. 11-12, at its location on Pearl Street. Set in an Italian restaurant in New York City, the leads are played by Maria Brea and Nicholas Tocci, pictured above.

"Sofronia," who is Norina in disguise, is only sweet and demure until the marriage contract (and thus the inheritance, and half of all of his belongings) is signed over to her.

After the marriage, she immediately turns into a vicious shrew

in hopes of causing a divorce, and living out the rest of her days with Ernesto on Don Pasquale's dime.

Hijinks obviously ensue in a hilarious romp.

Set in an Italian restaurant in New York, BARN OPERA's

Artistic Director Joshua Collier directs associate director Nicholas Tocci's concept as Vermont's favorite baritone (Tocci) is jumping in to sing the title role. This production is complete with all stereotypes, parmesan cheese

(See Barn Opera, Page 9)

## Welch talks issues as he gears up for Senate bid

BY JOHN FLOWERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Peter Welch prides himself on having strong views, while making "a big effort to listen more than I talk."

The Vermont Democrat will be doing a lot of listening during the next nine months leading up to the November General Elections, which for the first time in 15 years will feature his name on different spot on the ballot. Welch, 74, is running for the U.S. Senate seat that incumbent Democrat Patrick Leahy has held for the past 47 years.



REP. PETER WELCH

Welch acknowledges the big shoes Leahy's successor will have to fill, and he believes no one can truly measure up.

"We've been so blessed with Sen. Leahy's service; he's a once-in-our-history leader," Welch said during a wide-ranging interview with the Addison Independent. "I'm running to succeed Sen. Leahy, but no one will replace him."

Welch is the frontrunner in a field that thus far includes Republicans Christina Nolan and Justin Tuthill, independent Kerry Raheb, and Mark Coester of the American In-

dependent Party.

Vermont's lone Congressman, Welch serves as Chief Deputy Whip of the House Democratic Caucus and is a member of the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. He's also a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and the

(See Welch bid, Page 2)





# RENSU school board

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new search committee at its March 23 meeting and “start anew.”

“We’re back at square one, really,” Bertrand said in a telephone interview Monday afternoon. “I think we still have some time. We’ll have three months this spring and hopefully we can have more of the process be in-person and not always remote.”

The school district community was to have met the three superintendent candidates in a virtual forum last Thursday, with the candidates touring the schools in person and an in-person public meeting, but because the snowstorm dumped almost a foot on the Brandon area, those meetings were held virtually only.

Bertrand explained that of the three candidates who were finalists for the position, one withdrew ahead of Thursday’s virtual forum because she accepted a position at Washington Central, and the other withdrew after she learned the position was offered to Dr. McLaughlin. That candidate would still be in the running, Bertrand said, but would be required to reapply in the new search process.

Bertrand explained that the board had attempted to get a jump on the superintendent search process and get it done well before a new board was established at Town Meeting, but since that did not happen

the next best step was to delay until after the new board is established and then start anew.

Bertrand remained confident RNE-SU would attract more high quality candidates.

“We have an excellent school system that has always been forward thinking, thinks out of the box, and does education right for the kids,” adding that the district has had excellent leaders in Collins, John Castle and Bill Mathis over the past 40 years. Such excellence in leadership, Bertrand said, “is a trend we want to continue.”

Bertrand added that the public would likely be involved in the search process much as in this past search process, and that the search committee would be seeking public input.

## RNE-SU OPEN SEATS

Of the six seats on the RNE-SU board that are up for election, three seats are unchallenged and held by existing board members who are running for re-election, and three seats are open with no announced candidates. Two of those open seats represent the towns of Leicester and Pittsford, respectively, while another represents an at-large seat.

Write-in candidates will be encouraged to come forward to fill those seats, Bertrand said, saying she thought candidates would need to collect 60 signatures — from any town within the school district — to be elected if they remain unop-

posed. If a seat remains vacant after Town Meeting, the newly elected school board can solicit interested residents and appoint them. All appointed and write-in candidates are one-term only and would face a public race the following year.

“It’s the first time in several years that there have been so many open seats,” Bertrand said, suggesting that it may be because of “the pandemic and everything else going on that people just don’t want to add more to their plates. I can understand that... But sometimes people want to serve the schools and just need to be asked. I’m racking my brain trying to think of people in Leicester and Pittsford, and that other at large seat, who might want to be on the school board.”

In other school news, Bertrand said the board:

- had hired a nationally recognized coach from Texas to coach board members on policy governance issues on March 2;
- was focused on passing the proposed budget;
- was still considering a feasibility study to see if the district could build a middle school on land in Pittsford;
- and noted that the district was in the process of hiring an associated principal at the high school, and a new principal at the Leicester school.

## Kitty Toll plans to run for Lt. Gov. position

Danville, VT - On Monday at noon Catherine “Kitty” Toll announced her campaign for Lieutenant Governor. Joined by Former Speaker of the House Shap Smith, Former Speaker of the House Mitzi Johnson, her brother Marty Beattie, Simon Rosenbaum, Hannah Parker, and Nate Yates.

Kitty is running for Lieutenant Governor to be a strong voice for those who call Vermont home. With unprecedented federal dollars available, Vermont is at a crossroads. The paths we choose and the actions we take now will define our future.

As a former Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Kitty has extensive experience balancing and managing budgets. She will bring to the office of Lieutenant Governor thoughtful leadership, a strong work ethic and Vermont values when addressing our state’s challenges.

“Vermont is at a crossroads - with unprecedented federal dollars available the paths we choose and the actions we take will define our future,” Toll said. “I will strive to be an effective advocate for all of those who call Vermont their home. I will be a strong voice for the people of this state and really listen to Vermonters from the Kingdom to Killington; Barnet to Bennington; St Johnsbury to St Albans and to all points in between.”

To learn more about Kitty and why she is running for

Lieutenant Governor as well as updates from the campaign, please visit [www.kittyforvt.com](http://www.kittyforvt.com).

### ABOUT KITTY TOLL

Kitty Toll is a lifelong resident of Danville, Vermont. She was born on August 8, 1959, the youngest daughter of the late Harold and Catherine “Kate” Beattie who raised 14 children on the McDonald family dairy farm.

In 2008, Kitty ran successfully for a seat in the Vermont House representing the towns of Cabot, Danville and Peacham. Kitty served on both the House Agriculture Committee and House Appropriations Committee - eventually becoming Chair of the House Appropriations Committee. While in the House of Representatives. Throughout her time as a state representative Kitty was selected as a Council of State Governments

Toll Fellow (2015), a member of the Council of State Governments Eastern Leadership

Academy (2017), and a member of the Council of State Governments Future of Work

National Task Force (2019). In 2021, Kitty was elected by the Vermont Legislature to the University of Vermont Board of Trustees, for a six year term.

Kitty still lives in Danville today and is married to Abel Toll with two daughters, Kate and Margaret.

## Welch bid

(Continued from Page 2)

focus on those two senators because they’re in disagreement with the filibuster and Build Back Better (legislation). It suggests the Democrats aren’t united, but they are united. When you have 48 of 50 senators who are fully behind filibuster reform and Build Back Better. You compare that with 50 (GOP) senators under the implacable leadership of Mitch McConnell to fight for ‘no’ on everything.”

“If we had a few more Democratic senators, we’d have this passed and there’d be no big deal.”

• Dairy farmers. The company Horizon (owned by Danone) has vowed to discontinue receiving milk from 100 organic dairy farmers in New England, many of them in Vermont. Welch is among those calling for a Horizon to reverse that decision.

Looking broadly, Welch sees a possible intersection of agricultural

and climate change interests.

“There is an opportunity if we take climate change on in a very serious way,” he said. “Our agricultural community can be a big contributor to the reduction in carbon emissions. I’d want us to be very focused on how to fund ways where ag practices can be helpful to us in addressing climate needs, and provide another revenue stream for our farmers who are doing such important work and have made Vermont what it is.”

• Climate change:

“The issue of climate change is less about policy and more about getting the votes,” Welch said. “I’ve been extremely active in climate initiatives, particularly on the energy efficiency front, where I’ve been able to get Republican support.”

He said the stalled Build Back Better bill has strong climate change-related provisions.

“We know this is urgent, we

know that if we do it right we can create jobs as we reduce carbon emissions, but our big challenge in a 50-50 Senate is to get the votes,” he said. “I would keep at it.”

### 2022 MID-TERMS

While Democrats seem well-positioned to hold onto Leahy’s seat and Welch’s post in the House, recent polls and stalled initiatives don’t bode well for the party hopes to maintain a majority in both chambers of Congress.

“Mid-term elections are always a kill for the incumbent party, and President Biden’s approval ratings right now are low,” Welch said.

Still, Welch noted “it’s a long way between now and November,” giving the majority party a chance to bolster its standing with the electorate. He urged Democratic candidates to emphasize successes, such as The American Recovery Plan Act and infrastructure investments.

“Let’s remind people what we

have accomplished,” he said. “But we still have work to do. Many of the things we’re considering in Build Back Better ... would make a huge difference for Vermont. We could lower the average cost of child care for a young family from 30% of their income to 7%. We could get universal pre-K passed. We have climate initiatives in that legislation that are hugely supported by Vermonters. Giving government the right to negotiate prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies — that has broad support among Republicans and Democrats.

“We have the capacity, despite the headwinds, to get additional things done that would make a big difference for young families, the environment, and opportunities for children to get a good early start on their education,” he added. “I’m going to keep at it until the last vote is counted.”

Welch acknowledged he’s still learning lessons as a veteran legislator.

A conservative watchdog group filed a complaint against Welch last year after he was one week late in disclosing his wife’s (Margaret Cheney) sale of 113 shares (valued at \$6,238) of ExxonMobil stock, thus violating the STOCK Act — a bill he co-sponsored. He said he and his wife will no longer deal in stocks.

“The recent sale on Exxon is an example of why it’s good not to buy or sell,” he said. “The Exxon stock is not anything I owned. My wife owned it and she never bought it; she inherited 113 shares from her mother. But people rightly are concerned about it, so my response is, I’m not going to own, buy or sell individual stocks.”

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