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the Chronicle

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Hospital meeting is optimistic

by Joseph Gresser

NEWPORT — Around 90 supporters of North Country Hospital filled the banquet room at the East Side Restaurant on the evening of January 16. After a year during which the very existence of the hospital was threatened by the recommendations contained in a report commissioned by the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB), those gathered for North Country's annual meeting might have been apprehensive.

Instead the mood in the room was celebratory. The remarks from North Country board president Louise Bonvechio gave short shrift to the study by the GMCB-commissioned study, which suggested the hospital is teetering

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Brighton Town Manager gives notice

by Matthew Wilson

BRIGHTON — The Brighton Select Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Town Manager Noah Bond at its January 15 meeting. Board members also agreed to allow him to leave after 35-days instead of the 90-day notice required by his contract.

"Myself and the board would like to publicly thank Noah for his service to us and the town of Brighton," board chair Jeanne Gervais said.

"In the past few years, we've faced some challenges. We appreciate your commitment to public service. You go well beyond and it is not unnoticed. We didn't want this business to conclude without some acknowledgment of the things that you have done. We appreciate it," board member Heather McElroy added.

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Agent killed on I-91



A Border Patrol Agent sets up flares Tuesday morning to warn motorists that the southbound lane of Interstate 91 remains closed. The highway has been shut down since Monday afternoon in the wake of a shooting that left a Border Patrol Agent and another person dead and a third wounded. FBI and Customs and Border Patrol agents are carrying out investigations at the scene of the shooting in Coventry. For more about the shooting please see page two. Photo by Joseph Gresser

More legislators speak of session ahead

by Maria Amador

With the new legislative session underway, members of the General Assembly are settling into committee assignments and working on legislation they hope will bring change to the districts they represent. *The Chronicle* spoke with Representative Larry Labor of Morgan and Senator Sam Douglass of North Troy, who were not included in last week's legislative preview, about progress in the State House thus far.

For Mr. Labor, who has represented the Essex-Orleans district since 2023, this year ought to be more rewarding than the last. Environmental bills made the previous session frustrating because they failed to reflect "our rural nature," he said. Mr. Labor deemed those laws would be costly for his constituents, without being more environmentally efficient.

He said, "647,000 people in one small state are

not going to make an environmental impact, period... This isn't California, this isn't Boston."

Unlike major cities, rural Vermont lacks the density to effectively implement legislation like the clean heat standard, said Mr. Labor.

"If you live in Chittenden County, you have distinct transportation advantages, here we have to drive," Mr. Labor said. "We don't have mass transit, we don't have buses, other than school buses, and RCT might have a handicap access bus, but we just don't have the services available that population density experiences down there," he explained.

Mr. Labor added that while electric vehicles come with many incentives in the more populated areas of the state, the perks are fewer for those in rural Vermont. He drives an electric vehicle, but it's a regenerative hybrid, Mr. Labor explained.

"I don't need a plug-in charger...and that's

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Museum hosts modern kitchen junket

reviewed by Joseph Gresser

GLOVER — For an institution that boasts a mission of “glorious obscurity,” the Museum of Everyday Life was shedding brilliant light onto Sunday evening’s gloom. The museum, which has been unusually quiet over the past year, ended the quiet with its first Spice Rack.

The Spice Rack, which the museum’s founder Clare Dolan described in publicity materials as an evening of performances by local artists, turned out to be a twenty-first century version of a Vermont tradition, the kitchen junket.

More than fifty people crammed into a small space on the ground floor of the former barn that houses the museum. At one time, Ms. Dolan used to host bowling parties, using the gutters between raised concrete rows where cows were once held in stanchions for alleys.

These days the lower floor of the museum is made over, with part of it serving as the gallery for each year’s main exhibition, while a smaller area is reserved for occasions such as Spice Racks.

Those coming in through a spattering of wet snow found a table loaded with cheese and a variety of beverages waiting for them. At the front of the room, MaryGoRound, a well-known performer who often is seen with a stack of hula-hoops spinning around her neck, arms, legs, and other available body parts, was seated playing her accordion.

Ms. Dolan and the evening’s co-host Jennifer Miller welcomed their guests. Ms. Dolan said her father, Thomas Dolan, who, like Ms. Miller, is listed in the museum’s staff



An onion drops into the boiling pot as a trio of soldiers and an old woman wait for the stone soup to be done. Photos by Joseph Gresser

directory as a philosopher at large, had come up with an idea for the evening.

Mr. Dolan, she said, ordinarily specializes in schemes he insists will make his daughter rich and famous. His idea for the inaugural Spice Rack was somewhat more modest — a limerick contest.

MaryGoRound, who stepped forward after the opening remarks successfully attempted to curry favor with her host by reciting a poem about Ms. Dolan that rhymed Glover with love her. Ms. Miller dashed forward to reward her with a prize shot-glass.

downtrodden woman who thirsts for vengeance.

The piece has been performed frequently and is, perhaps, best known from a recording by Judy Collins. Nina Simone offered a blood curdling version in a concert at Carnegie Hall that was put out on a record.

MaryGoRound’s performance at least equaled the intensity of Ms. Simone’s, and perhaps exceeded it, an almost impossible thing to imagine, and a completely thrilling experience to hear.

A group of puppeteers from the Bread and Puppet Theater made the short trip up the road from the company’s farm to perform a couple of shows. One centered on “baaaaaaed news” delivered by a trio of goats.

The other, an old show called *Snow*, is the Bread and Puppet version of the tale of stone soup. Three soldiers — represented by a single puppet with three heads — are discharged from the army after having killed everyone. They find themselves standing under a flurry of paper flakes, shivering and hungry.

Fortunately for them, an old woman comes by. She lives in an old house and eats old apples. The kindly soul invites the soldiers to share her home and apples, but asks one favor in return. They must help her rid her basement of the cockroaches that are gobbling up her apples.

The soldiers eagerly agree and, true to their word, have soon done away with all the pesky insects. In their enthusiasm for the task they also destroy the woman’s house and her apples.

That leads to a magic journey to a warmer clime in a flying basket. Only on their arrival, does the woman start a pot of soup with one
(Continued on page 21.)

Immediately, MaryGoRound shifted radically from being the provider of background music by performing two songs written by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. Both come from theater production on which the two artists collaborated, and in each the song is sung by a character named Jenny.

The first, from the *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, provides a quick summary of the ethic of that mythical city in a chorus that says, “As you make your bed you must lie there, and no one will care what you do, and if somebody kicks then that’s me, and if someone gets kicked it will be you.”

That song was mild by comparison with the “Song of Pirate Jenny,” from the more familiar work, *The Threepenny Opera*. It is a terrifying vision laid out by a

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Clunky puppets and a fierce songstress

(Continued from page 20.)

stone and water. All turns out well.

Snow's puppets are somewhat clunky, but the show calls for their movements to be quite refined at times. The puppeteers handled the technical challenges the show presents beautifully.

Before her turn, dancer Maura Gahan spoke about a visit to a Fred Webster's barn in Coventry, which she described as being filled with all manner of practical objects, categorized and labeled. Ms. Gahan said she found herself musing on the barn itself, those thoughts led to a two-part work.

She didn't perform in the first section, but instead called on the talents of the Bread and Puppet crew, but was called a barn dance. It centered around a quilt and began with movements suggestive of a quilting bee, with performers threading needles and using sewing motions as part of their movement vocabulary.

As it progressed, the abstract movements gradually changed into a reel, performed under the canopy of the outstretched quilt. The dance ended with the performers saying, "back to work," as they returned to their seats.

Ms. Gahan, dressed in paint-stained coveralls then entered, feeling the wall of the actual barn that houses the museum. Otto Muller created a soundscape to accompany the dance with his violin

and by playing mic'd pieces of hardware with a bow.

Although Ms. Gahan is a skilled dancer, she generally chose to avoid technically challenging movement as she worked to convey the feelings the spaciousness and utility the old barn inspired in her.

In remarks before her piece, Ms. Gahan suggested she hopes to find a way to make the noun "barn," into a verb, so that in her performance she is able to barn. While that transformation did not occur Sunday night, her dancing was beautiful and evocative. As she returned to the wall and the door that led into another part of the building, Ms. Gahan said, "back to work," neatly bracketing the two parts of her choreography.

The final piece of the night was a short animated film by filmmaker Meredith Holch entitled "Brother Bird." The name of Ms. Holch's production company suggests that anyone can make films like she does.

That may be true, but in no universe can just anyone make films as profound yet light as those she produces. The world of "Brother Bird" glows with an inner light that comes from the layers of translucent colored tissue she uses as her material.

There are three narrators in the film, each telling a story from their own life. Two are men, one from Poland, the other from New York City. Ms. Holch's story is the third.



MaryGoRound plays and sings pieces by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill.

Ultimately, though, the three stories prove to be parts of a single tale, one of animals carrying the spirits of deceased loved ones.

In the first story, a friend of the narrator always has a praying mantis as a companion. The insect lives in the wild, but always returns to the man. When the friend dies, the narrator finds himself visited by praying mantises wherever he goes.

A man who is close to his grandmother tells the second story in the film. His grandmother dies and he is surprised when a bird with her affect, unexpectedly shows up in

his family's living room.

Ms. Holch speaks in the final segment about her brother Chris. He died, but on a trip to the beach one day, she, her sister, and her mother, find people pointing at the parked car in which they are sitting. When Ms. Holch gets out of the car, she finds a giant seagull sitting on its roof.

The whole family agrees the bird is from Chris.

For an ordinary film, the last few paragraphs might be considered spoilers. Not in this case. Nothing can spoil "Brother Bird," because only a viewing can convey in richness of Ms. Holch's imagery, and the honesty and depth of its expression.

Its brief running time contains more about life and the human condition than all the superhero films ever made piled together.

Oh yes, about the limericks, Paul Cillo stayed home in Hardwick, but submitted his contribution by email. It read:

There once was a woman of Venice,

Who used hardboiled eggs to play tennis.

When asked of the cost,

She said as she tossed,

"You don't know how fertile my hen is."

My guess is that Mr. Cillo will be handed a shot glass next time he stops by the Museum of Everyday Life.

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