

A LIFE

‘She was always happy’



Maybelle Dumont, of Royalton, Vt., prepares table settings at a dinner in Randolph, Vt., on Sept. 9, 2016. Dumont has been putting together community dinners across the area for the past 40 years.

VALLEY NEWS — GEOFF HANSEN

Maybelle Rose Dumont 1936 - 2025

By ALEX HANSON
Staff writer and opinion page editor

ROYALTON — In a 2016 conversation with a Valley News reporter, Maybelle Dumont stated proudly that she had never moved away from her family home on Royalton Turnpike. “Born right where I live,” she said. “I never got weaned.” This kind of straightforward declaration was characteristic of how Dumont spoke and of how she lived

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

Maybelle Gagne and her horse, Flicka, in 1957. Her mother was dead set against her having a horse, so Maybelle bought Flicka with money she earned picking raspberries and blackberries on the family’s farm.

her life. She radiated positive energy to such an extent that her life seemed simple. “She was like a great, big

SEE DUMONT A8



VERMONT HEALTH CARE

Hospitals seek moderate budget changes

By GRETA SOLSAA
VtDigger

Vermont hospitals presenting annual budgets in public hearings this month largely aligned their proposals with state regulatory guidelines or suggested even lower or negative growth rates. That’s a marked difference from the last two years when most hospitals’ requests exceeded the benchmarks for budget growth set by the Green Mountain Care Board.

Staff and board members at

the state’s top health care regulator, alongside health care leaders, have been immersed for two weeks in hearings to review 2026 budget requests for the 14 hospitals under the board’s regulatory purview. The fiscal year for hospitals in the state begins Oct 1.

The annual hospital budget hearings are transpiring amid an ongoing health care affordability crisis, with the state’s largest insurers teetering on the edge of insolvency and Vermonters bearing the highest health care premiums in the country in recent

years.

The state’s top health care regulator is reviewing three metrics within hospital budgets this year. The board asked hospitals to limit the increase in their net patient revenue — the amount of earnings through patient service without uncompensated care and other deductions — to 3.5% or below this fiscal year, and set a rate of 3% for growth in operational expenses.

Most critically for Vermonters’ private health insurance costs, the care board set a benchmark

of a 3% increase in the amount hospitals can charge commercial health insurers this fiscal year.

The high cost of health insurance in Vermont reflects the overall high cost of health care in the state, and the decisions of insurers, hospital and regulatory health care leaders, Vermont’s Chief Health Care Advocate Mike Fisher said in an interview Thursday. All these factors impact Vermonters’ ability to afford the care they need and can lead

SEE VERMONT A5

ROYALTON

Board keeps bridge plan

Construction of new span will mean lengthy closure

By LUKAS DUNFORD
Staff writer

ROYALTON — Despite the frustration of some residents, the Selectboard voted 3-2 last week to proceed with construction of a permanent span at Fox Stand Bridge, also known as Royalton Hill Bridge.

With the tie-breaking vote, Selectboard member Larry Trottier opted to finish the project as soon as possible with the smallest cost to residents.

“The taxpayers, in the end, I believe, would be better appreciative of putting in a permanent bridge and having it done with — and having our taxes not go up any more than they have to,” Trottier said of Wednesday’s afternoon vote, which was held at the Royalton Town Offices.

Wednesday’s vote was necessary after a 2-2 deadlock vote the night before, with Trottier not present on Tuesday. Trottier was joined by members Patrick Dakin and Stuart Levasseur in opposing the installation of a temporary bridge. They mainly cited lower taxes and a faster timeline.

Selectboard members Nell Gwin and Robert Gray supported the temporary bridge, largely pointing to safety concerns and costs to affected residents.

As a result of the vote, construction of the new permanent bridge connecting Route 14 to Royalton Hill Road and Gilman Road is slated to begin in 2027 and last two construction seasons. The crossing is expected to reopen in the fall of 2028.

The total cost of the permanent bridge replacement is estimated at just under \$7 million. The town’s share is \$347,000, according to a handout provided by the town administrator at the Tuesday meeting.

The standing bridge, which spans 165 feet across the White River, has been closed since April 2024, when an inspection by Vermont Agency of Transportation, or VTrans, revealed that rust had corroded structural components.

The bridge repairs have faced a series of delays, with a temporary bridge initially being set for 2025 and moved to 2026. The tem-

“You’re just putting that burden on a smaller percentage of the taxpayers.”

BRADLEY SICK
Royalton resident

CANAAN

State issues advisory for Canaan Street Lake

Test shows elevated level of E. coli

By CLARE SHANAHAN
Staff writer

CANAAN — As the sun beat down Friday morning, the town beach at Canaan

Street lake was nearly empty except for a patchwork of bird footprints, six ducks and a few beachgoers.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services issued a fecal bacteria advisory for the beach

SEE CANAAN A5



Mark Roberts, of Canaan, N.H., swims in the water at Canaan Street Lake in Canaan, N.H., on Friday. Roberts, who said he spends several hours a day swimming in the lake, wasn’t deterred by an advisory warning visitors of elevated levels of bacteria posted by the NH Department of Environmental Services.

VALLEY NEWS — ALEX DRIEHAUS

INSIDE



SPORTS

NEWCOMERS STANDOUT

The future looks bright for two Patriots rookies after a 20-12 preseason win over the Vikings.

Page B1

LOCAL & REGIONAL

A BELOVED BOND

Set on 150 acres tucked away on a hillside in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, Dog Mountain has become a destination for dog lovers looking to explore nature, take in art, or pay tribute to a pet.

Page A3



Classified	B5	Local&Reg.	A2
Close-Up	B8	Obituaries	A4
Comics	B7	Sports	B1
Editorial	A7	World&Nation	B3

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