

HARTFORD

Board
pulls back
on ceasefire
resolution

Members opt to cancel
previously scheduled vote

By EMMA ROTH-WELLS
Valley News Staff Writer

HARTFORD — The Selectboard has canceled a special meeting scheduled for next week to consider adopting a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

In a 6-1 vote on Tuesday, the board backtracked on its plan to take up the proposed resolution on April 22.

“I do support a ceasefire and I’d like to see our community find ways to support our Palestinian residents as well as immigrant community members,” board member Miranda Dupre said in a recording of the meeting. “I just don’t know if this resolution at this time will do that.”

Last year’s board rejected, 4-3, a citizen-sponsored resolution with hundreds of signatures that called for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to U.S. support for Israel’s military offensive.

More than 1,200 Israelis were killed in Hamas’ attack on Oct. 7, 2023. Since then the Israel-Hamas war has claimed the lives of nearly 51,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. Women and children make up more than half of the dead, the ministry claims.

Israel’s military has destroyed much of Gaza’s infrastructure and displaced around 90% of its 2 million Palestinian residents.

Brandon Smith, who worked on last year’s resolution, was the lone board member to support going ahead with the special meeting.

At its April 1 meeting, the board voted 6-0, with Michael Hoyt absent, in favor of scheduling the special meeting, which had been proposed by Smith.

His rationale for wanting to reintroduce the proposed resolution this month stemmed from Israel reinvading Gaza after a ceasefire that went into effect on Jan. 19 fell apart, Smith said.

“(T)he ceasefire didn’t hold, and we’re supplying weapons and political cover to Israel’s extermination campaign yet again,” he wrote in a Listserv post on April 13.

Smith also hoped that with three new Selectboard members elected last month, the resolution might have a better chance this time around.

Smith then spent the week before Tuesday’s meeting collaborating with community members who crafted last year’s resolution to revise it.

The revision includes an updated Palestinian death toll and calls upon Vermont’s congressional delegation to filibuster legislation prioritized by President Donald Trump and calls on Congress to refuse to

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LEBANON

ALL THINGS IN DUE TIME

Eight years after arson,
a congregation returns

By ALEX HANSON
Valley News Staff Writer

LEBANON — Dennis Merrihew started coming to First Baptist Church when he was around 11 years old. That’s the better part of a lifetime ago for the 74-year-old Lebanon resident.

Since then, his daughters were married in the old 1870 Gothic Revival structure and he served for many years as its caretaker. That building’s tall ceiling heard an untold number of prayers from Merrihew and his fellow congregants.

In December 2016, an arsonist burned down the 146-year-old church. While Merrihew still grieves a bit and has fond memories of the original church, he was pleased to be standing in the sanctuary of its new, and newly opened, replacement on Palm Sunday.

“I’m going to miss that old open feel to it,” Merrihew said. But the new building is “a well-laid-out church for our needs now.”

After eight years and a few months of fundraising and construction, stops and starts, First Baptist’s congregation finally was able to return to their consecrated space at the corner of School and Green streets, a block off Colburn Park, giving them a week to prepare for Good Friday and Easter. It has been a long road, but one they felt was laid out for them from above.

“Good morning! Welcome to First Baptist Church,” Carol Rataj, a member for the past 20 years or so, said at the start of the service in a packed sanctuary. “This is a good time to thank God.”

After Rataj’s welcome and invitation to “ladies’ Bible study” and an April 26 ladies’ lunch, Steve Girdwood, who led the church’s building committee, gave a brief account of the church’s status.

“You may see some technical difficulties today,” he said, referring to the church’s new sound and video gear. “If something kind of goes wonky on us, remember, we’re here to praise God.”

There’s plenty of work left to do on the building, he said, particularly in the basement, which will house a fellowship hall, a large kitchen and its longstanding Raven Box Food Pantry, which serves around 700 people a year.

The church had about \$8,000 left in its construction budget at the end of March, Girdwood said. It received a quote from an electrician for work on the basement and elevator, for \$8,000. Over the past several years of construction, which church members have done largely with their own hands, this has become a pattern.

“God gives us exactly what we need, when we need it,” he said.

While that’s true of the new building, it might be true of the fire that claimed

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Above: Chase Pyer, of Enfield, climbs the scaffolding while building a cross in the First Baptist Church of Lebanon as, from left, Lenny Bolduc, of Canaan, Jim Newcomb, of Lebanon, and Bolduc’s wife Terry, hold a timber in place on Dec. 11. The timbers for the cross came from the sills of the original 1870 church building, which the Bolducs salvaged after it burned in December 2016. Right: One year after construction commenced on the site of the Lebanon First Baptist Church, the new building takes shape in October 2019.



VALLEY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS — JAMES M. PATTERSON

SPORTS, B1

BORN TO RUN

Mascoma runners Gunner Currier, left, and Trevor Mahew check their time before starting a run in West Canaan. Currier, who will turn 18 two days before the Boston Marathon, will be on of the youngest runners in the field on Monday.

VALLEY NEWS — JENNIFER HAUCK



Judge hears arguments
in schools’ DEI lawsuit

Hanover and Dresden districts among plaintiffs

By ANNMARIE TIMMINS
New Hampshire Public Radio

A federal judge in Concord pressed the Trump administration Thursday for more details about its ban on diversity, equity and inclusion in schools, including what

would be prohibited. The federal government’s answers offered little clarity for educators wondering what they can — and can’t — do.

Presiding over a lawsuit challenging the new restrictions, Judge Landya McCafferty noted the federal government has given schools conflicting guidance on what

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INSIDE



WEEKEND FOCUS

GOLDEN NUGGETS

Nearly 100,000 pounds of meteoritic matter enters Earth’s atmosphere every day, scientists estimate. In the Sahara desert, finding rare rocks has become a popular pastime — and a business opportunity. Page D1

WORLD & NATION

SWEET TREAT

Peeps is Just Born’s most recognizable brand and one of a handful of candies that evoke strong reactions — good and bad. Some say an Easter basket isn’t complete without Peeps while others deride them as being indestructible. Page D7



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Editorial	C1	Pen&Ink	C3
Entertainment	B6	Sports	B1

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