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Democratic fundraiser hosted U.S. Sen. Welch and state treasurer Pieciak

By Adam Davis

The Rutland County Democratic Committee recently held a fundraiser at a private residence in Chittenden in the effort to raise

Mike Pieciak spoke alongside known and unknown local politicians with the unifying message of converting Rutland County voters into reliable and consistent Democratic Party supporters.

“If you want to get ahead in Vermont politics, you need to pass the Rutland test,” Welch said. “If you can win in Rutland, you’re probably going to do well in the rest of the state.”

For context, while Rutland County leans Democratic, it traditionally has a strong representation of Republican voters, as well. For instance, in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, Republican voters accounted

for 42% and 43% of the county’s overall vote, respectively.

money for local candidates and help turn Rutland County into a solid blue Democratic stronghold. Prominent politicians like Senator Peter Welch and State Treasurer

Local Democratic candidates are hoping

Rutland Democrats → 10



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GRACIE'S GRILL IS NOW OPEN



Courtesy Killington Resort

The annual FIS women's ski world cup will return to Killington over Thanksgiving weekend.

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victory. She'll be joined by teammates, former University of Vermont skier Paula Moltzan, Olympian AJ Hurt and Nina O'Brien, who is making her return from injury this season.

Returning once again this year is the athlete bib draw, fireworks display and festival village opening to kick things off on Friday night. Friday night activities are free to the public. No ticket is required.

Saturday and Sunday will feature world-class ski racing, as well as live music performances, starting at just \$10 for a ticket. The event will highlight Heroic, an initiative empowering

women in the ski industry, with panel discussions and a movie on Saturday evening.

“I am thrilled to welcome the World Cup back to Killington once again. It is the best way to kick off the season, a testament to our snowmaking team and the strength of the ski community as a whole,” said Mike Solimano, president and general manager of Killington Resort and Pico Mountain. “The Stifel Killington Cup is about the community as much as the competition. Last year, we were able to donate \$330,000 to support regional winter sports organizations through the

Killington World Cup Foundation, and we are proud to continue this tradition and donate a portion of ticket sales, including 100% of VIP packages, again this year.”

A percentage from all ticket options benefits the Killington World Cup Foundation (KWCF), which supports athlete team services and provides grants to bolster winter sports infrastructure and access to winter sports throughout the region. Proceeds from 2023 ticket sales supported over 33 winter sports programs in eight states.

For more information visit: Killington.com/worldcup.



Chef Philippe Niez's Culinary Artistry at Kelly Way Gardens.

Pastry Chef Philippe Niez is taking over the Red Barns at Kelly Way Gardens for a special dinner event! Expect his French pastry artistry, local ingredients, and beautifully paired wines.

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to shrink those numbers in upcoming local and national elections.

Keynote speaker Senator Welch took the microphone first and touched upon multiple subjects like the upcoming election, his call for President Biden to step away from the presidential race, the events of Jan. 6, and how Democratic candidates can win the hearts and minds of Republican and undecided voters in the second most populous county in the state.

"I'm proud to be a Vermont Democrat. There's a Vermont way that America needs more of. It's not complicated. We respect our neighbors. We accept differences in opinion. When the house is on fire, you show up if you're in the volunteer fire department. If your neighbor is in a ditch, you pull them out," Senator Welch told the gathering of supporters. "We don't ask for a credential. 'Who did you vote for?' We do that because we know that trust in each other is even more important than the Constitution in keeping this Democracy together. You get trust when you give trust. Our impulse is to extend a hand, offer to help, and to try and put yourself in the shoes of another person whether you disagree with them or not."

"My view about Rutland [County] is if you want to get ahead in Vermont politics, you need to pass the Rutland test," Welch continued. "If you can win in Rutland, you're probably going to do well in the rest of the state."

Local candidates like Representative William Notte (Rutland-7) then took



By Adam Davis

U.S. Sen. Peter Welch spoke at a Democratic fundraiser in Chittenden on Friday, Sept. 6.

the microphone and spoke of their records and their opponents, as well as the challenges that Democrats face in the certain districts of the county.

"It pains me how many districts we have where there's a Republican running unopposed," Notte said. "So I ask those of you that are in such a district to consider supporting House candidates so that we can help turn Rutland County more blue."

After all the local candidates had their chance to address the crowd, State Treasurer Mike Pieciak spoke at the end of the evening.

"I think the future of Vermont runs through Rutland County and Rutland City. We have a really optimistic vision of the future of our state. We have a growing economy, people are moving here, and we're expanding our housing stock. We need to do more of all of it. But if we can make that happen here in Rutland, we will be a very successful state over the next decade," Pieciak said. "The same is true of our politics. If we can win here, we can win across the state. It's really important to invest in Rutland, and we're really happy to do so."

"Our office identified housing as the No. 1 issue in our state. It's the No. 1 economic and social issue," Pieciak continued. "So we have to put as many resources from our office as we have to invest in housing. We put \$100 million of support in low interest loans for affordable housing throughout the state, that's 1,100 units of housing total and we want to do even more in my second term."

← Hazard plan:

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The auditor's report faults leadership — specifically, the State Hazard Mitigation Planning and Policy Committee, a board of top state officials that includes the secretaries of the Agencies of Natural Resources, Administration, and Human Services, among others — for failing to ensure that the plan was implemented.

Staff turnover at the responsible entities and the Covid-19 pandemic also contributed, according to the report.

The auditor's office recommended that state officials strengthen oversight,

monitoring and training for the entities responsible for carrying out the plan.

In a letter to the auditor, Jennifer Morrison, the commissioner of Vermont's Dept. of Public Safety, and Sarah Clark, the interim secretary of the Agency of Administration, expressed appreciation for the report and accepted its findings. State officials would consider its recommendations, they said.

Eric Forand, the director of Vermont Emergency Management, which is responsible for drafting Vermont's hazard mitigation plan, called it an

"aspirational" document.

"You want to do as much as you can," Forand said in an interview, "so you codify it in the plan, and you try to do what you can to complete what you can."

He said that it was impossible to tell whether completing the steps in the plan would have made a difference during the flooding in the past two years. "There's no hard and fast answer that if we did something, it would equal something else," Forand said. "There's never that certainty in the emergency management world."

← Community health:

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to enhance the quality of the services including:

- Offering telehealth services
- Collecting data on patient social risk factors
- Engaging patients through health information technology
- Exchanging clinical information online with key providers' healthcare settings

Community Health fulfilled all these criteria in 2023, earning recognition for these advanced approaches to quality healthcare, including the use of electronic records, an online patient portal, and population health data collection.

"We have to use technology to improve access, engage patients, and leverage data to improve outcomes," said Hudson-Knapp. "Whether it's around the management of diabetes or hypertension, preventative screenings, or coordinating care we're regularly putting the data in front of our leaders and providers so we can see how our efforts translate to outcomes, constantly seeking ways to get better at what we do."

2024 Addressing Social Risk Factors

Community Health was also recognized for collecting data on patient social risk factors and for increasing the percentage of patients who received enabling services and resources during the last two years.

"Community Health and organizations across the country are moving in the direction of improved data analytics and data-informed decision-making," said Hudson-Knapp. "Our responsibility is to understand the needs of our patients so we can help address them. That goes beyond developing a medical treatment plan and into the realm of

helping people navigate some of the other social needs that so often impact their lives and wellness."

Community Health currently collects, tracks, and analyzes data on over 20 quality measures including ongoing quality improvement efforts around preventive screenings, care coordination, transitions of care, and management of chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

Community health assessment

Community Health participated in the recently released Community Health Needs Assessment for the Rutland Region, completed every three years. The report identifies health equity as the top priority falling in these three areas: access to care, community connections, and community safety, taking into account continued focus on addressing social risk factors such as access to primary care, mental health care, food, transportation, housing, child-care, and suicide prevention, all programs and issues that fall into Community Health's quality initiatives.

"We have spent 20 years dedicating ourselves to this work, in these communities," said Hudson-Knapp. "I'm grateful to be part of an organization that demonstrates such a strong commitment to quality, and to our patients. Every single day of the year, our clinicians and staff provide such excellent care, whether it's your visit to the office today, that call to your care team with questions or with other needs, or the weekend visit to Express Care. Wherever and whenever it is, both as a team member and as a patient, I feel lucky to be engaged with an organization that is so rich with excellence."

For more information, visit: chcrr.org.

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lily promoting open board positions in an effort to attract diverse applicants, but the reality is that the entire process of selecting and appointing board members is ridiculously opaque. The reason for that is because the primary unwritten criterion for board membership is that each member must be actively engaged in the activities (hunting, trapping, fishing) that the board is supposed to regulate. Conflict-of-interest concerns raised by groups like Protect Our Wildlife have been ignored by the governor and VTF&W, where board members have voted on matters that may financially impact them. On any other board those members would recuse themselves, but we know that this board operates with impunity.

Upon reviewing emails I obtained from a public records request to the VTF&W, there was a board applicant in April who had non-game interests, with a particular interest in birding, who came highly recommended. On the surface, it would seem that she would have been an excellent candidate who could have offered some balance to the board. But it is no surprise to those of us who have observed the process for years that her application, like those of many similar applicants before her, simply vaporized into the ether. I emailed the commissioner about this, and his July 15 response to me said, "There have been no decisions ... a reminder these appointments are made by the governor."

The commissioner punts the issue to the governor, but we know the governor relies heavily on recommendations from the commissioner. And so the powers that be have maintained radio silence, and the seats remain unfilled as of the date of this letter.

All of this begs the question of why this board even exists. Why does the VTF&W, after collecting public comment from all Vermonters through public hearings, grant the final say on regulations to the board, composed entirely of hunters and trappers who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo? Why is the process such that a select group of Vermonters (i.e., trappers, anglers, and hunters) has power over everyone else? Wildlife is considered a public trust resource, and Fish & Wildlife is mandated to protect and conserve wildlife for all, which means considering all voices. The current paradigm is in direct conflict with this statutory requirement (title 10 §4081).

Official statements from the governor's office and the VTF&W Dept. are full of inclusive media bytes about preserving the health of Vermont's wild places and creatures for all to enjoy, whatever their priorities. But wildlife advocates know for whom they are really working. And it isn't us.

Lisa Jablow, Brattleboro