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The winds of change stir debate over **Guilford's future landscape**



In 2018, a \$200 million project was pitched to Guilford town officials that may ultimately lead to as many as 25 largescale wind turbines being built. The project drew large crowds and strong reactions from residents at public meetings this summer. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

By Shawn Magrath The Evening Sun

GUILFORD - "The whole last year has been very divisive in the community," Guilford Supervisor George Seneck said when recounting the events of a proposed wind turbine project that's driven a wedge within his township.

In 2018, a \$200 million idea was pitched to town officials that may ultimately lead to as many as 25 large-scale wind turbines in Guilford – a township known to have more elevated peaks than any other in Chenango County. The final

outcome would be an approximately 100 megawatt wind powered electric generating facility. Calpine Inc., the project sponsor, has been pedaling the project for more than two years with aspirations of raising roughly two dozen turbines, each standing a staggering 650 to 675 feet from base to blade tip (more than 13 times the height of the Chenango County Courthouse and twice as large as those in neighboring Madison County, making them some of the tallest in the country).

While the proposal's being embraced by many Guilford

residents, others have been less likely to warm up to it. Despite the nationwide push for clean energy, some worry the costs outweigh the benefits – costs like the affect that the project may have on the environment, property values, and the overall aesthetic nature of an otherwise scenic rural community.

High Bridge Wind, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Calpine, submitted a project application to the New York Department of Public Service in July. Before moving to the next phase of the project, Calpine needs permission from the Siting Board of the New York State Department of Public Service.

According to statements from Calpine, "The project will interconnect into an existing New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) transmission line that traverses the area, delivering power into the New York State power grid."

"Calpine continues it community outreach efforts to landowners, local officials and area residents," said a company spokesman.

Even so, grassroots groups opposing the project voiced

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Catholic Charities expanding to improve emergency services

BY CATHERINE SASSO The Evening Sun

Catholic Charities of Chenango County will be upgrading the Roots and Wings thrift shop and food bank, as well as centralizing services, with the purchase of the building located on 103-105 Leilani Way.

In the beginning of January, Catholic Charities closed the deal on the purchase of the 12,000 square foot office building. The main focus for the building will be to for the expansion for the food bank, which distributed 138,230 pounds of food last year. Renovations will begin starting in the Spring of 2020.

"Through our strategic planning process we had identified the need to improve our Emergency Services programs located at Roots and Wings. It was more cost effective for us to purchase a new building and move our programs to enhance services as opposed

to renovating the building on Berry Street." said Catholic Charities Executive Director Robin Cotter.

The building will not only serve as the new food bank and thrift shop, Catholic Charities hopes to turn the building into a one stop shop for residents of Chenango County to get connected to the services they need.

"We will continue to have a client choice food pantry that serves all residents of Chenango County, a thrift store, prescription assistance, NOEP enrollment, navigation and care coordination services through Catholic Charities. Additional partners through WIC, Fidelis, Cooperative Extension and other partners will be co-located at the facility. Enhanced transportation services will also be provided," said Cotter.

Catholic Charities offers Services programs. include adult and child care

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Executive Director Robin Cotter and Compliance Officer Jeff Chesebro were excited to announce Catholic Charities will be upgrading the Roots and Wings thrift shop and food bank. The building will not only serve as the new food bank and thrift shop, Catholic Charities hopes to turn the building into a one stop shop for residents of Chenango County to get connected to the services they need. (Photo by Catherine Sasso)

In Your Own Words



Chenango Sheriff **Ernest R. Cutting Jr.**

Sheriff's office encourages community participation and leads by example

The Chenango County Sheriff's Office goes beyond their daily service by spreading positive interaction amongst the community.

Since 1996, one of the most popular programs is the Sheriff's Summer Camp. Partnering with local organizations and independent sponsors, over 300 children have the opportunity to attend camp each year at no cost. Some who attended camp as a child, return as a counselor to help instill caring, responsibility, respect and honesty amongst the campers. The camp, located on a waterfront, has athletic fields where kids are engaged in activities from sunrise to after dark. Demonstrations from the deputies, corrections staff and 911 dispatchers are popular amongst the kids. Whether it's a hands on look at police, fire and ems vehicles, hikes through the trail system, swimming, or s'mores around the campfire, memories and stories are guaranteed to be made.

During the holiday season, the Shop with a Sheriff program provides a positive, encouraging shopping experience for local youth. With the assistance of local schools, children and teens are selected for the event where they are partnered up with Sheriff's employee. Each youth has an allotment of money where they can purchase gifts for themselves and their loved ones at the local Wal-Mart. The event is always a huge success providing joy to all who attend.

During 2019, the Sheriff's Office hosted the Photos with Santa event that was open to all in the community. All were encouraged to stop at the Sheriff's Office to have their photo taken with Santa, warm themselves with some tea, hot cocoa and snack

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Catholic Charities expanding to improve emergency services —

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coordination, counseling, assistance in enrolling for state benefits, as well as the thrift shop and food pantry. Cotter also states they offer navigation services to help people find services not offered by Catholic Charities.

"We meet people where they are at and strategize ways to move them forward," said Cotter.

Last year Catholic Charities served 14,440 elderly, adults, and youth. "Individuals living in poverty and the ALICE, Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed, for Chenango County is approximately 48 percent. We are working to address many of the needs that this population has. The elderly population is also growing. We are closely watching how to support this population as well," said Cotter.

She states they are very fortunate to receive grants from local foundations such as RC Smith, Follett Foundation and The Greater Norwich Foundation. Last year they received a generous \$200,000 Innovation grant from the Care Compass Network.

However, funds are dwindling to support the many programs Catholic



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Charities is offering. As the case with many non-profits, being located in a small rural area effects the organizations ability to be properly funded.

"We have been bypassed on certain grants due to the rural nature of our community and low populations. Our needs do not appear as prevalent as other urban areas due to the population involved and the number of people impacted," said Cotter.

The mission of

Catholic Charities of Chenango County is dedicated to those in need while promoting human development, collaboration, and the elimination of poverty and injustice. "We strive to empower those served, to transform their lives in the spirit of God's love and compassion," said Cotter.

Catholic Charities is regularly evaluating the needs of the community and population. During a recent survey they realized the change in how people prefer to received supported housing services. With an increased desire from individuals wanting to live in their own apartment as opposed to living in a group home environment, Catholic Charities decided to change up the model for supported housing.

"Another major development for our agency was closing our Chenango House congregate care home on Fair Street. We are at the forefront of services for those living with mental illness. Many individuals prefer to live in

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classrooms provide adult learners with learning experiences that are relevant to the job.

their own apartments as opposed to living in a congregate environment. We worked with the Office of Mental Health to secure apartments for all of our clients with enhanced staffing supports," said Cotter.

Each program is also analyzed using a program rubric.

"We evaluate programs based on mission, fiscal viability, experience, community need, etc. There are times that we have had to eliminate programs such as our domestic violence program or reduce counseling services due to lack of funding streams. There are also times when we have expanded due to need such as in our Care Coordination programs," said Cotter.

Catholic Charities employees about 100 staff to cover the multitude of programs they offer. Cotter states that its hard to retain long term employees because of the rural area.

"Many qualified workers go to more populated areas and larger businesses that can afford to pay more money. We hire many individuals directly out of college. The level of service provision and the mission at Catholic Charities provides indi-

viduals with exceptional human services experience," said Cotter.

Employees are encouraged to volunteer and participate in numerous community events. They have navigators and staff who set up tables at many events to promote offered services and connect individuals to services.

"We also volunteer at events such as the IRT hosted by United Way and Colorscape Chenango," said Cotter.

Cotter states that the non-profits in Chenango County work well together in times of need. The organizations work together to enhance services, rather than duplicate them.

"We are a close community. People work together in time of need," said Cotter.

Cotter summarized their goals for 2020 by saying: "We serve those who are most vulnerable and in greatest need throughout Chenango County. We are motivated to awaken the human spirit, inspire self-awareness and nurture growth. A trauma informed approach will be utilized in all our dealings and decisions. Those we serve will increase their capacity to be self-sufficient and fully integrated members of the community."



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Success Story

McNeil Jewelers

2019 was a busy year for McNeil Jewelers. The store had to make room for the jewelry lines Norwich has come to love. We brought on the LaFonn line of sterling silver with simulated diamonds, the Ostbye line of diamond engagements ring in the newest and most popular styles and Diva Diamonds, sterling silver with diamonds that shimmer. We also have a line of inspirational jewelry Made in Kennebunk, Me. with words of wisdom and coordinates of Norwich, Oxford and Sherburne. 2020 will bring on a new line of wedding bands by Lashbrook that can be as personalized as you can imagine.

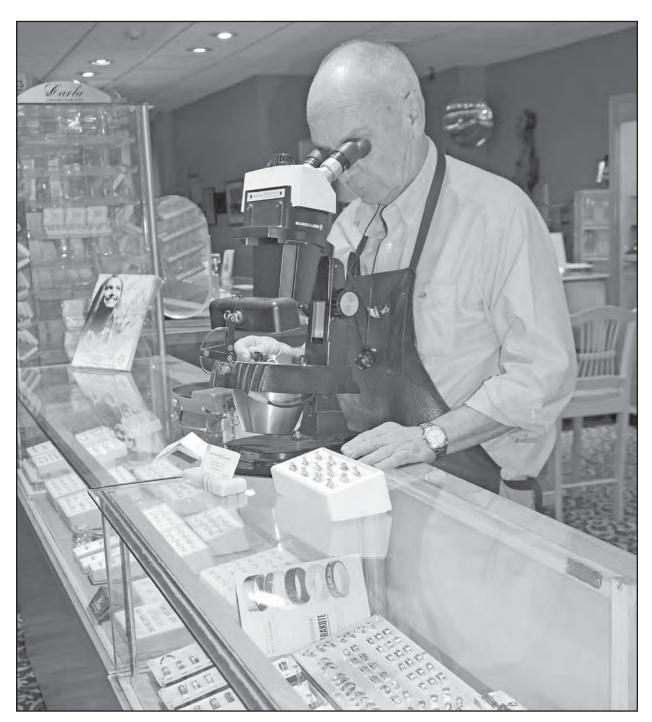
Patrick still works on watches for our customers and for other jewelers in the area. If you have an old pocket watch and would like to get it working again, stop in and see Patrick and get his advice. And if you just need a watch battery, we change them in all brands of watches, while you wait.

James is a very skilled jeweler that can repair most of your jewelry should the need arise. When you need a repair, stop in and talk to him since he will do your work. Be sure to stop in every 6 months and have your rings professionally cleaned and checked, no matter where it was purchased.

In 2020 our plans are to continue to bring more exciting jewelry lines to the store and as always to continue to provide our customers with outstanding service and quality

Our family at McNeil Jewelers love to help you pick out the perfect gift for your family and friends. McNeil Jewelers has been a Family Tradition since 1946.

Check us out on Facebook, Instagram and our soon to be updated website at www.mcneiljewelers.com



Jeweler Jim McNeil inspects an antique diamond ring for clarity at McNeil Jewelers in Norwich. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

Sheriff's office encourages community participation —

Continued from Page 15

on donuts and cookies. With a successful turnout, it is another smile filled event!

The Sheriff's Office provides Operation Safe Child ID cards for all who wish to participate. Children under the age of 18 are provided identification cards containing their picture, fingerprint image, date of birth, height, weight, identifying marks and medical conditions. This information can be used by law enforcement agencies throughout the United States to help identify missing children.

The Child Passenger

Safety Seat Inspection Program is provided free to all community members. Our agency has certified technicians who will inspect child passenger safety seats for defects and manufacturer safety recalls. The technicians will also show parents and care givers how to properly install the car seat. In many cases, the child safety seat is exchanged and replaced with a new safety seat.

Throughout the year, the Sheriff's Corrections division supervises the work detail program that goes out into the community providing clean up services after major

The Officers events. can be seen supervising the cleanup of the Fairgrounds after events such as the Blues Fest, the County Fair and the annual car show. Officers also supervise the Cemetery Restoration Program. Officers oversee the mowing, trimming, landscaping of the grounds, cleaning and repairing of damaged headstones at our local cemeteries. All the equipment is provided, maintained, and transported by the Sheriff's Office to the location. The Officers involved in the Service Work Alternative Program can be seen on the sides of the highways

cleaning litter and debris from the roadway and shoulder. The SWAP and Work Detail Programs contribute to maintaining a garden that harvests fruits and vegetables. The program helps workers learn lifelong skills in planting, maintaining and harvesting crops. This project has been cost effective and the Sheriff's Office is able to donate the harvest to non-profit organizations to help needy families in the county.

The Sheriff's Office hosts an annual awards ceremony that invites many of the local governmental employees, local

politicians, judges, community members and employee family members to join in an evening that is meant to honor the hard work, dedication and professionalism of the Sheriff's Office employees.

Each year, the Sheriff's Office hosts a Corrections Academy for newly hired correctional officers. The academy is opened up to all the neighboring agencies that wish to send their recruits for the state mandated training. Upon completion of the academy, The Sheriff hosts a graduation party that allows for all family members of the graduates to

attend to honor the hard work and accomplishments of the graduates. Special guest speakers, local media and press also attend to help welcome the graduates into the career of community service!

Officers can be seen in the Sheriff's Office lobby handing out informational pamphlets, coloring books with crayons, and badges to children. The Sheriff's Office takes pride in the local community and is thankful for the support from its citizens.

— Chenango Co. Sheriff Ernest R. Cutting Jr.



Success Story

Chenango County Realty

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"It's not just a house... It's your HOME."

For 30 years, Chenango County Realty's professionals have lived by that mantra.

Broker/Owner Dave Thomas puts it this way: "We help people find homes, vacation and business properties, and we do that by CARING about them."

Thomas, who has seen the real estate market go from boom to bust and back again, notes: "There are new tools and people shop differently, but the need for a qualified real estate professional to handle your sale or purchase is still the same. Ask anyone who's recently bought a property – a great Realtor makes all the difference."

Dave Thomas is an avid outdoorsman, motorcycle enthusiast and "Gym Rat". Dave is the expert in all areas of real estate. His team members testify: "Dave is always ready and available to give his advice on any property or transaction - his guidance is invaluable," says Dan Brown, two-year licensee. Tere Stronach agrees, "Dave's our Captain! He keeps this business running and ensures all his licensees are successful." The team of Realtors is a close-knit diverse family. Donna Ashton joined the Chenango County Realty family 20 years ago and is a retired postmaster, kayaker, crafter and real estate lister-extraordinaire. Diane Fanelli, a 17 year team member, is a city-turned-country gal, horse property specialist, determinedto-find-the-right-property-for-myclients agent. Tere Stronach with over two-million in 2019 sales and awarded 2019 Best of Zillow, has eight years on the job. Tere is our in-house problem-solver, coffee

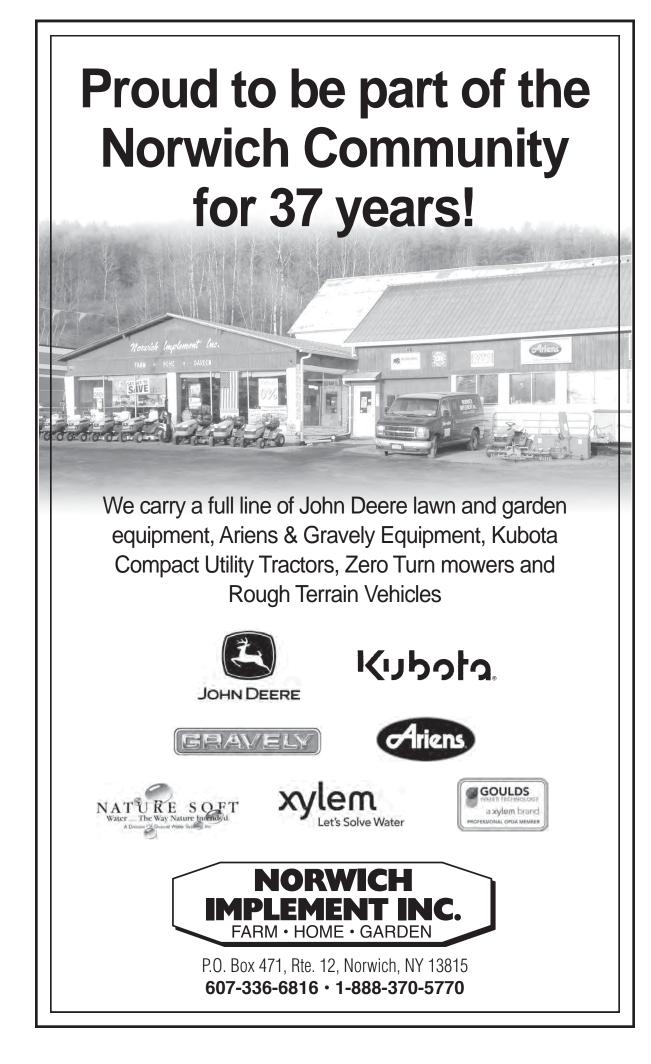
addict, all-day/every-day agent. From First Time homebuyers to investors and outdoorsmen, Tere always goes the extra mile for her clients. Dan Brown, a Cornell graduate with a degree in Agricultural Engineering, in two years has become a great asset to Chenango County Realty. Born and raised in Chenango County on a dairy farm, Dan is our resident farm specialist and more than willing help his clients with all their real estate needs – from farms to homes.

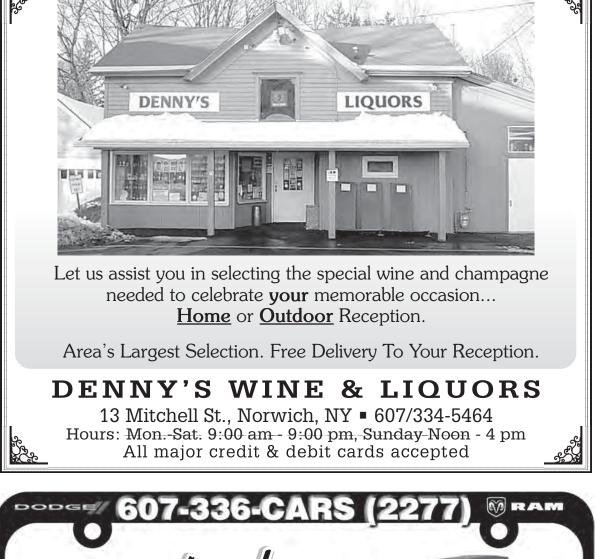
"In our family-like company, we don't take ourselves too seriously, but we take your real estate business very seriously," notes owner Dave Thomas. "Every client has his or her own needs. We take you through the entire home buying process. Whether you're buying or selling, we take the extra time to see the sale go through from begin-

ning to end and keep you informed.

He adds: "We're excited to be celebrating three decades of real estate excellence. Whether it be first-time home buyers achieving a dream; established families looking to upgrade; hunters, fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts looking for a quiet country escape; vacationers seeking that perfect getaway or water-front paradise; retirees looking to downsize; or entrepreneurs looking to expand - we give our commitment and drive to fulfilling your real estate needs."

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The winds of change stir debate over Guilford's future landscape —

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concerns at several public meetings in mid-2019, including one heated meeting in June where residents accused Guilford Board members of entertaining the project for personal gain. At the same time, Guilford Town Board members, alongside other advocates, said the project would bring down local taxes, directly benefit lease holders, and provide jobs (albeit some of which would be temporary).

Seven months later, there's been little sway on either side of the argument. The town board remains "very unified" on the project, said Seneck, and anticipates a lot of movement on it in 2020. Consequently, this leads some residents to feel their concerns are left blowing in the wind.

"I don't think there's been any change of opinion on the town board; I don't know what to say of the community," Seneck said. "We continue to see opposition to this. I believe the group that opposed it is going to continue to oppose it at the state level."

Calpine's application to the state is currently in waiting in New York's Article 10 process. Under Article 10, state officials have a year to review the project before greenlighting it to the next phase. It may not be until late summer of 2020 that locals know anything more.

In the meantime, the Town of Guilford is working to clarify exactly who benefits from this project, and how so. Town officials are now in talks with the Chenango County legislature as well as the two school districts that would be directly impacted: the Bainbridge-Guilford and Gilbertsville-Mount Upton central schools.

"We have spoken at the town level to both schools and to the county," Seneck said, "and I think the intent is, although nothing has been scheduled, to come to the table at the same time to discuss what's going on."

As for the town that would be most impact-



Executive Director Robin Cotter and Compliance Officer Jeff Chesebro were excited to announce Catholic Charities will be upgrading the Roots and Wings thrift shop and food bank. The building will not only serve as the new food bank and thrift shop, Catholic Charities hopes to turn the building into a one stop shop for residents of Chenango County to get connected to the services they need. (Photo by Catherine Sasso)

ed? Calpine Development Director Alec Jarvis said Guilford could make \$1.2 million a year off the project, reshaping the township's current annual tax levy of about \$909,000. Guilford taxpayers may see a 20 percent reduction in their town tax bill, and those are "conservative estimates," according to Seneck. "We don't have the (final) numbers yet," he added, "but we hope to start discussion on that in January."

According to Calpine,

the community benefits are multi-layered. The project would generate a zero-emission wind energy facility that meets goals of producing 50 percent of the state's energy needs by 2030. The company also says landlease and easement agreement payments during the development and operation of a wind farm offer "viable, long-term revenue streams for families." It claims that rural communities benefit from public road enhancements and increased tax revenues to fund local infrastructure and public services, including school systems, hospitals, libraries and emergency services. What's more, "construction, operations and maintenance jobs create direct and indirect benefits of additional jobs

Welcome to

and increased demand for local goods and services," as stated on Calpine's website.

Although the actual tax benefits are still fuzzy, the obvious winners will be the property owners who let land to High Bridge. Lease holders will receive payments for the next 30 years. This includes nonresidents who lease their property to High Bridge. And since each wind turbine requires roughly 18 acres of land at its foundation, land lease and easement agreements could prove very lucrative to the select few who choose to pursue them.

No doubt the project has created tensions in Guilford where residents are divided on the issue. Contrary to the town's 2014 comprehensive plan which shows more than 62 percent of the town's surveyed populace favoring a large wind facility, opponents of High Bridge Wind, led by a grassroots coalition dubbed "Save Guilford," say they represent the town's majority. Many have voiced concerns over rights, safety, and well-being of Guilford residents at town hall meetings and have called on local leaders to stop the project from moving forward.

Then there's the uncertainty caused by the undetermined PILOT agreement between Calpine and the Chenango County IDA. The PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) would give a tax break to Calpine, so long as the company meets their end of the bargain. But since those negotiations are yet to be had, the final figures of any tax benefit are up in the air.

There has, however, been action to protect local roads should Calpine's vision of a clean energy facility in Chenango County come to fruition. In 2019, the Guilford Town Board adopted a road use law that

would hold High Bridge and its parent company, Calpine, accountable for road damages caused by construction or maintenance. Board members anticipate adopting a road use agreement in early 2020. The Chenango County legislature has yet to do the same for county-owned roads.

The Guilford Board has also heeded concerns over what High Bridge would do if a turbine loses function. A decommissioning plan mandates that the company dismantle a turbine if it sits dormant for an extended

S TV & APPLIANCES

period of time. Seneck clarified that revenues collected by his town would be unaffected by the functionality of each turbine.

Seneck additionally said that the Guilford Town Board has controlled the project as best it can by adopting local laws which would hold Calpine responsible for producing at least 50 percent efficiency. It's also subjecting the company to its decommissioning plan, which must be reviewed annually and adjusted for inflation.

If the company doesn't like those proposals, they may still walk away from the project. However, Jarvis, Calpine's development director, said if the project doesn't succeed, the company has agreed to pay 100 percent of the decommissioning costs and would have to return the surrounding land to its pre-construction state.

Looking ahead, the biggest test may be reuniting a small community ravaged by big plans, said Seneck.

"I think that's what the entire board finds as the biggest challenge this year," he said. "We have discussed at the board what can be done as a healing process, but I don't have a magic answer to that. I would imagine that, at this point in time, there is none. But it's a concern the board has."

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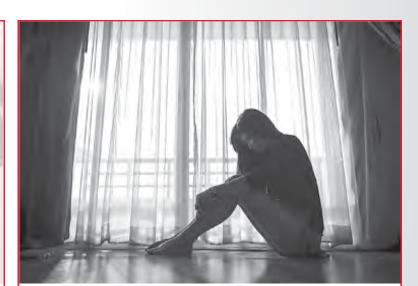
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