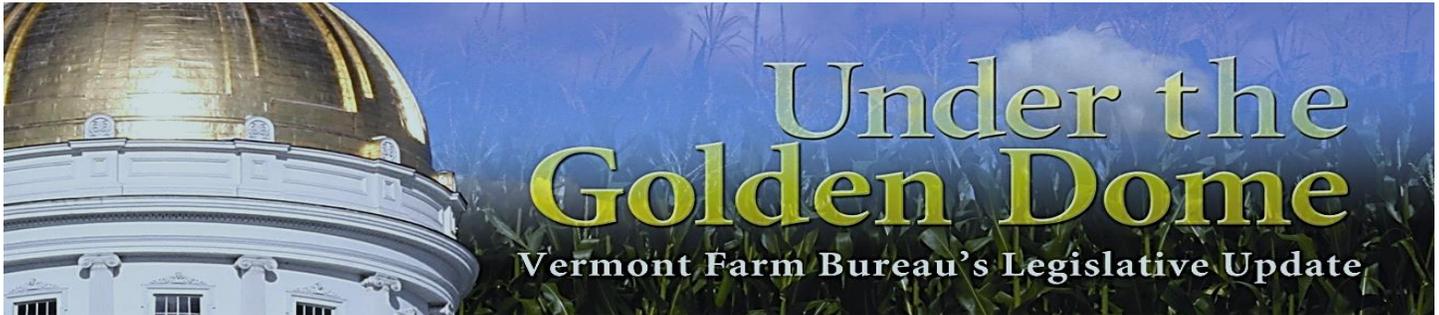


*When you call the Sergeant-at-Arms: Please leave your name & phone number*

Say, "I'd like to leave a message for \_\_\_," Leave a clear message, such as:

"I do **not** support..." **OR** I am asking for your vote on \_\_\_"

*Please refer to a bill number or name whenever possible.*



**FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 18, 2019**

**SEE YOU ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2019 AT THE STATEHOUSE!!**

Don't forget our scheduled Meet and Greet in Montpelier this coming Tuesday! Plan to be in the Statehouse Cafeteria by 8:00 a.m. where we will be offering coffee and pastries to legislators for about an hour. Here is the schedule:

- 8:00a.m. to 9:15 a.m. – Statehouse Cafeteria for coffee and pastries
- 10:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. – Meeting with the Senate Agriculture Committee in the Ethan Allen Room (upstairs behind the cafeteria). NOTE: this is an estimated time, as the Senate will meet with us as soon as they adjourn from their 9:30 meeting in the Senate chamber.)
- 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Meeting with the House Agriculture Committee in their new room - #32 just across from their former room. NOTE: This room is significantly smaller than their former one, so some of us will have to wait in the hallway while others talk to the committee.

Parking for this event is free at the Public Parking/Capital Complex lot just beyond Montpelier High School and behind the Department of Labor on Memorial Drive. The free shuttle runs on the hour and every twenty minutes thereafter, beginning at 7:00 a.m. It goes from the parking lot to National Life and then to the Aiken Avenue side of the Statehouse (near the Chittenden statute). The route returns to the parking lot until 5:30 p.m.

Please make plans to come for any part of the day; lunch is on your own in the cafeteria, which offers hot lunch, pizza, a salad bar, soups and sandwiches at reasonable prices.

If you run into difficulties finding us, please TEXT me at 802-777-3857 for assistance.

We understand this time may be a challenge for some members; please check with your counties to determine if a meet & greet is scheduled at a more convenient date and

time. Several counties (Orange, Orleans and Addison) host breakfasts or luncheons during the session to chat with their legislators closer to home!

### **PLEASE WELCOME BERNIE JUSKIEWICZ!**

The newest addition to our Advocacy Team, Bernie Juskiewicz, will be attending the Meet & Greet on Tuesday. Please introduce yourself and welcome him aboard.

Bernie spent Wednesday and Thursday of this week at the Statehouse, learning the players and programs within the agricultural and forestry worlds. He is well-respected and well-known at the Legislature, as he was the representative for Cambridge until stepping down this past election. I've had many positive comments about Bernie working for Farm Bureau from legislators!

We'll be deciding soon how to distribute our Team throughout the different committees and issues and let you know when that happens.

### **THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN VERMONT**

There are many groups taking on the challenge of what our industry will look like – and how it will survive – into the future. Several of them visited with the House Agriculture Committee this week.

The Council of Rural Development, headed by Paul Costello, presented their plan to focus on diversification of farms and promoting value added processing to assist farmers in transitioning out of activities that may not be making a living.

A coalition of UVM Extension, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and Vermont Council of Rural Development have produced a white paper (mentioned in the last UTGD) starting the conversation and inviting other organizations to participate.

Yet another group headed by former Representative Will Stevens and including Roger Albee, Will Rapp and Gil Livingston (among others) have also been meeting to discuss solutions and the future.

If you have the opportunity to interact with any of these or others who are talking about what farming will/should/may look like going forward, please do so. Farmers need to be at the table for these discussions.

### **WATER DISCUSSIONS**

Senate Natural Resources began to investigate clean water – how to achieve it and how to pay for it – in committee this week. A draft legislation written by Legislative Counsel Member Michael O'Grady was reviewed by the members. Chair Bray noted the proposal to assess a \$40.00 per parcel all-inclusive fee would raise \$14.4 million of the \$18 million allegedly needed to run a program. The assessment would be added to the

tax bill coming from individual towns and municipalities. Discussion included an adjustment based on criteria to be developed, including whether the parcel was already being assessed a clean water fee (some towns already do this), whether there were already projects on the parcel or being developed (such as manure pits or collecting ponds) to mitigate water pollution and how much adverse pollution was occurring on the individual parcel.

The funds would have to be spent on management, programs, developing criteria and developing metrics to determine “adverse” pollution and whether there was a net increase in clean water resulting from projects. The Clean Water Board would be tasked with determining how projects would be prioritized and work with other stakeholders (ANR/AAFMM/NRCD/Municipalities/VTrans and more) to distribute the funds, probably as block grants.

The Tax Department would have the right to withhold any tax refund if the parcel fee had not been paid. Collection dates would be December 1<sup>st</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup> – my question is whether this coincides with the tax collection dates currently required by all towns.

The timeline for this proposal is quite aggressive, considering the process within the Legislature: the intention is to pass the bill and make it effective July 1, 2019. After that, the rules would be adopted by January 1, 2020, the plan on collecting would be completed by January 15, 2020, and the first assessment would be collected by July 1, 2021.

Although the Senate Natural Resources Committee does not usually initiate funding mechanisms, Chair Bray felt the discussion needed to begin in his committee since the per parcel fee on property is the nexus between connecting water quality with land use issues.

This is likely not the only bill to be introduced this session on water funding issues and we will be updating members as the conversation continues. This is certainly a priority for Farm Bureau and if you have any thoughts on how to fund water quality, please let me know.

Our policy reads: Vermont Farm Bureau supports legislation to fund the Vermont Clean Water Fund by raising all monies in an equitable way with all persons receiving the benefits of clean water to contribute to same.

## **ACT 250 IN HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES**

Representative Harvey Smith has moved from House Agriculture to Natural Resources, which will be invaluable to our industry as far as having a voice to educate other committee members on our challenges. He reported to me that during an introduction of the Commission on Act 250 Report this week, other members asked quite directly why the Agriculture Exemption was recommended to be continued within Act 250. (The exemption for building on farms was also continued, as was the exemption for equine

facilities).

This conversation has been held in several committees. We need to respond with the following:

- Vermont is 80% forested; of the remaining 20% which is open, about 75% is currently in farming. Agriculture is keeping the land open, putting billions of dollars into the economy through jobs (including tourism) and products.
- Local food is requested by many of our residents; agriculture provides the local food they want.

Forestry did not fare as well by the Commission, as every suggestion they made was not incorporated into the final report.

- Forests provide jobs and the carbon sequestration they offer should be considered as a positive carbon footprint.

In House Agriculture, Diane Bothfeld from AAFM testified a concern we have all identified: throughout the Commission report, the term “critical resource area” has been added as a definition that will require a permit. Critical resource areas include river corridor, which could be problematic for farmers.

This is another issue we will be following. No bill has as yet been introduced, although there is a draft waiting in the wings.

## **ON FARM SLAUGHTER LAW SUNSETS THIS YEAR**

Rural Vermont’s testimony in several committees featured their priorities this year, which include more regulation of or eliminating the use of pesticides, a concern with pesticide drift, and health care for farm workers. They also mentioned the sunset of the on-farm slaughter legislation that occurs this year, and noted they will be back to offer language to not only continue the legislation but to make it more workable for small farmers. If you have any thoughts on this issue, please let me know.

## **HELP WITH THE BOOTH AT THE FARM SHOW**

Peggy at the office is working up some great educational promotions at the Farm Show, but she needs help in the booth. We will be hosting several Vermont authors who will be reading their books on agriculture during the event, and Peggy is going to have a reading session twice a day in the booth. Please give her a call at 802-434-5646 and volunteer for an hour or two – then enjoy the show! January 29-31 at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds, Essex Junction – see you there!

That's it for this week-

From the Team: Joe, Bernie, AnnaJo and Jackie