

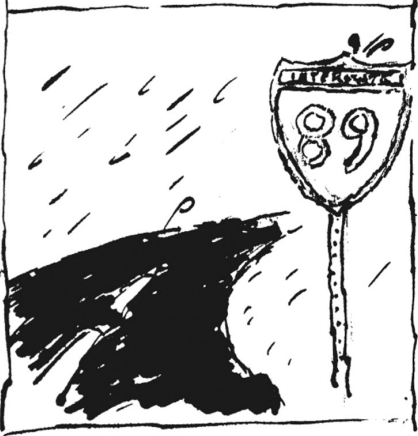
# The Bridge

FREE, INDEPENDENT & LOCAL

Connecting Montpelier and nearby communities since 1993 | OCTOBER 6–19, 2011

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I sit here, wondering whatever on earth compelled me to drive up here on this dark and rainy morning.



Detail of comic by Jeff Potter.

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A photo spread of local goings-on

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## LIQUID ASSETS

### Owner of Spring in East Montpelier Revives Large-Scale Development Proposal

by Miriam Hansen

Plans to develop a spring on North Street in East Montpelier have been revived, pending the expiration in March of a moratorium on large-scale groundwater extraction. At their town meeting three years ago, East Montpelier residents supported a resolution to pass a “three-year moratorium on wholesale withdrawals of more than 10,000 gallons of [ground] water per day.” The moratorium was prompted in large part by Daniel Antonovich’s proposal to run a pipeline from his North Street spring (now referred to as Antonovich Spring) for the purpose of bottling water.

Now, Antonovich and his project manager, Dean Loren, are floating a new proposal to develop the spring. Antonovich and Loren were accorded first billing at a September 15 meeting of the East Montpelier Planning Commission.

Roughly 45 people crowded into the new East Montpelier Fire Station’s meeting room to listen to Loren’s outline of a plan that appeared to suggest they would become the new water system for the village of East Montpelier.

The system Loren proposed is made up of an array of elements, including reservoirs and water banks; a pipeline from the Antonovich spring to Crystal Springs (a small for-profit water utility owned by Dean Hedges that gets its water from springs above Cherry Tree Hill Road); another leg of pipeline down to either the Route 2 Packard Industrial Park or the Washington Electric site; a system of stone aqueducts; and a farm that would process maple syrup, grains, and forage and herb crops, as well as fruits and vegetables. Loren did not mention water bottling.

Loren spoke of creating 140 jobs, but when a member of the commission asked if any plans had been formally proposed or permits applied for, the answer was no on both counts.

A central theme of Loren’s presentation was that without Antonovich water, the town of East Montpelier’s fire department would be out of compliance with the state due to a shortage of water available to their fire hydrants—an assertion roundly refuted by East Montpelier’s Fire Chief John Audy in the question period. Audy explained that the hydrants Loren claimed could not deliver sufficient water actually belong to Hedges, who installed them many decades ago for the purpose of flushing his system. These hydrants, according to Audy, are not a requirement for the town’s firefighting system, and Loren’s contention that the fire department needed this water was neither accurate nor “a huge selling point.”

The East Montpelier Fire District (no relation to the fire department) is a quasi-municipal organization of people currently on the Crystal Springs water supply who’ve gotten together with the intention of owning and managing their own water. According to Public Service Department employee Susan Martin, it was a huge shock to meeting attendees when Loren revealed Antonovich’s intention to buy Crystal Springs from Hedges, since the Fire District’s reason for being depends on purchasing and running Crystal Springs. If Hedges (who has been in discussions with the Fire District to turn the utility over to the group upon his retirement) creates a partnership with a commercial operation, it would jeopardize the state funding that



The Antonovich spring. Photo by Dana Durnell-Kandley.

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