

MESSENGER

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Welch's downtown tour hits key business issues

Merchants suggest ideas of their own

By MICHELLE MONROE
Messenger Staff Writer

ST. ALBANS CITY — "Our downtowns are absolutely vital to Vermont and they face enormous challenges," U.S. Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt, said Friday morning during an appearance here.

Welch was in St. Albans promoting three pieces of legislation he has drafted to aid downtown businesses. The bills provide assistance with energy improvements for commercial businesses, requiring credit card companies to charge "reasonable and proportionate" fees to businesses, and requiring companies to collect the sales tax on Internet sales.

As part of the tour Welch spoke with Mark Ladue, owner of One Federal Street, which houses the restaurant, One Federal. John Ashton, a local energy auditor, performed an energy audit of the building, which lacks insulation on the second floor and has older windows. The building was originally constructed in 1840.

Marcus Hamblett, co-owner of One Federal restaurant, said that insulation would reduce his business' energy costs "tenfold."

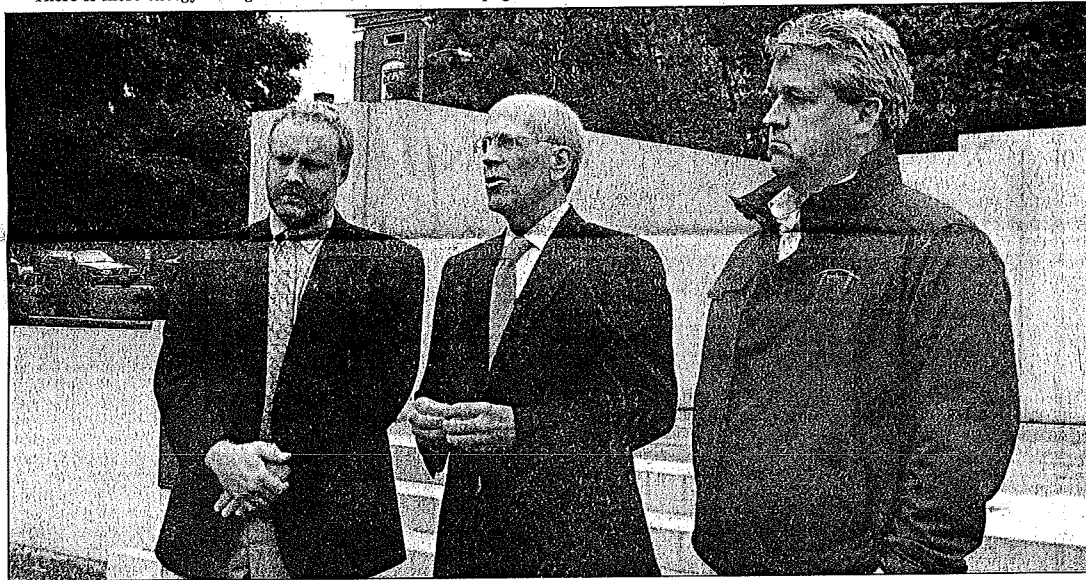
Legislation sponsored by Welch to provide incentives for homeowners to make energy improve-

ments passed Congress earlier this year and was signed into law. Welch has no drafted legislation to provide similar incentives for owners of commercial buildings. "There is more energy savings

on the commercial side than there even is on the residential side," Welch said.

Energy improvements also provide jobs for local workers and

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MICHELLE MONROE, St. Albans Messenger

At top, Marcus (right) and Elizabeth (center) Hamblett, owners of One Federal, discuss the space above their restaurant with Congressman Peter Welch. Above, St. Albans City Manager Dominic Cloud (left), Congressman Peter Welch (center) and St. Albans Mayor Marty Manahan (right) stand in Taylor Park and discuss Welch's legislation to aid downtown businesses.

Every piece tells a story

1867 barn coming down to go back up once more

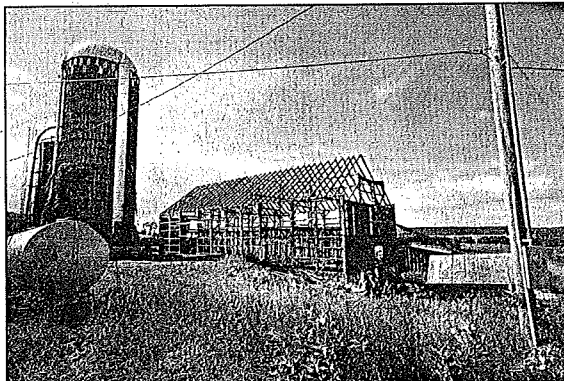
By NAT WORMAN
Messenger Correspondent

FRANKLIN — The moveable feast of technique, bold enterprise and sentiment reached a high point here Tuesday when an 160-foot-tall crane lifted plates, rafters and beams from a 143-year-old, 50-foot-high barn and laid them one at a time flat on the earth.

The work actually began much earlier. Even before a week ago Friday, when Brady Giroux, founder of Black Barn Timberworks, began knocking out pegs that locked the pieces in place.

Some 700 hardwood pegs have held the 45 x 100-foot barn together since the day in 1867 when Dolphus and Sarah Colton Dewing saw their mighty barn stand erect, the first of its size in town.

This past week, with pegs out, cables held the timbers tight until Lex Hudak drove a machine to the



NAT WORMAN photos

The Dewing barn in Franklin is just a skeleton prior to final disassembly last week.

edge of the barn where he and Orsen Hogan fixed straps to a 50-foot-long, 300-pound hemlock plate (the horizontal timber that bears and anchors rafters).

The crane circling slowly about,

the cable playing out, Giroux joined David Derby, to settled the plate gently to the ground.

"Those hemlock plates were cut green and probably weighed six or

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Surprises bad & good
Make-A-Wish recipient looks back at both kinds

By LISA M. BOUCHER
Messenger Correspondent

COLCHESTER — In a St. Michael's College, fourth floor dorm room, freshman Maria Rainville, of St. Albans, is limberly poised in a beanbag chair explaining her dual major of Education and Psychology.

It is the effervescent and engaging teen's assertion that her calling is to help people, but not in a medical way. This epiphany arose from her brush with renal cell carcinoma last year (a common type of kidney cancer), when she was a senior in high school.



Maria Rainville

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TODAY IN BRIEF

No bail for Haiti missionary 'adviser' in Vt.

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — A former adviser for American missionaries accused of taking children out of Haiti is being held without bail in Vermont, where he was returned to face charges in a 2002 illegal immigrant smuggling case.

Thirty-two-year-old Jorge Torres was in the spotlight in February after the Haiti earthquake, when he acted as a lawyer and spokesman for 10 Baptists from Idaho who were detained in Haiti on child kidnapping charges.



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# Welch

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most of the materials used are made in the U.S., he added.

Ashton said energy efficiency improvements typically pay for themselves within five to six years.

Hamblett would like to use the space over the restaurant to create a culinary school, providing more local jobs.

Legislation Welch proposed to contain credit card fees charged to merchants passed as part of the financial reform bill approved by Congress earlier this year.

Welch said he drafted the legislation after small business owners showed him how much they were paying credit card companies in fees every time a customer paid with a credit or debit card. In some cases, merchants were actually losing money after paying the fees.

Mike McCarthy, owner of Cosmic Bakery and Cafe, explained the fees can reach as much as six percent of the transaction. "For me, that's thousands of dollars a year," McCarthy said.

Companies typically charge a set per transaction

## 'Most consumers really appreciate their local merchants ...'

Rep. Peter Welch

fee plus a percentage of the sale. Many also charge annual fees, McCarthy explained. "I cannot pass that expense onto customers," McCarthy said.

The legislation gave the Federal Reserve the authority to establish reasonable and proportionate fees. Welch said he and Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, who sponsored the bill in the Senate, would be meeting with Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke this week to discuss implementation of the bill.

"We're going to express our strong concern that the regulations be written consistent with the intent of the legislation," Welch said.

"This was the first time we beat the banks," Welch said, "but the fight is just beginning."

The Federal Reserve,

whose board is governed by members of the banking industry, will draft the regulations implementing the legislation.

Welch also spoke with Kevin Smith, owner of Kevin Smith's Sports Connection, who in January raised the issue of sales taxes on Internet sales during a business roundtable with Welch.

Welch has drafted legislation requiring Internet businesses to collect sales tax. Currently, consumers are required to pay the sales tax on Internet purchases when they file their income taxes, but Welch pointed out the requirement is unenforceable.

Asked if there has been resistance from consumers, Welch said there has been surprisingly little. "Most consumers really appreciate their local merchants

and understand the fairness issue," Welch said.

Local businesses have become show rooms for companies such as Amazon.com, according to Welch. Customers examine the item in their local store, and then purchase it on line, many times skirting the sales tax.

The bill will not pass this year, Welch said. There are only two weeks left before Congress adjourns for the year. "We're building support for it," Welch said.

Welch also expressed support for a bill coming up in the House of Representatives this week to provide \$30 billion in loan guarantees for small businesses. Banks provide the loans, which are guaranteed by the federal government.

The bill is "intended to get credit flowing again to our small businesses," Welch said.

During his visit, Welch also visited St. Albans City Elementary School where he spoke with Team U.S.A., a student leadership group.