

Life experience
Lieutenant governor hopeful focuses race on 'economic freedom'

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Once bitten
Crews clean up local watersheds, one clump of frogbit at a time

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JUNE 11, 2026 WEEKLY NEWS COVERAGE FOR CHARLOTTE AND HINESBURG THECITIZENVT.COM



PHOTO BY SOPHIA BALUNEK

Left, Ethan Knapp and right, Steve Grunewald take hold of one of the roof beams for the new Town Common pavillion that was constructed on Saturday.

Hinesburg raises the roof on the new Town Common pavilion

BRIANA BRADY
STAFF WRITER

A pavilion raising, not so different from a barn raising, takes many hands.

Under the clouds this past Saturday, June 6, a group of volun-

teers gathered on the new Town Common in Hinesburg's village to bring the long-planned pavilion to life.

The structure is a centerpiece to the project, a years-long endeavor to create an outdoor community space in Hinesburg, which broke

ground last spring.

"It's helped give the town a little more identity. I think it solidifies it as a community and a place to live," Hinesburg resident Dan Opton said of the common.

Opton, who owns Blue Heron Building, has been volunteering

his time to oversee the pavilion project. It can get complicated to build any kind of structure on public ground.

After confirming the exact

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Charlotte seniors get AI primer

LIBERTY DARR
STAFF WRITER

Brandon Tieso, a 28-year-old Charlotte resident, was spending last Friday afternoon at the Charlotte Senior Center, giving some of the older folks a primer on artificial intelligence — how to spot it, what to do with it and, more importantly, how to live with it.

"Hi, Maya," Tieso called to his computer screen. "You're at the Charlotte Senior Center, in front of a group of wonderful people learning about AI. We're really looking at you, because I would suppose you are a fake voice and a fake thing."

To everyone's surprise, the voice on the other end of the line spoke back, with almost no hesitation, and intonation that felt entirely real, dynamic even. She even shot some questions back to the folks in the room.

"You caught me," she replied. "Um, I'm definitely not a person, and I don't have a heartbeat or a favorite coffee order, but while I'm fake in the physical sense, the conversation we're having right now is very real. I'm curious, what do seniors think? Do I sound like a robot to them, or just someone who's really good at pretending?"

Everyone in the room agreed,

See **AI** on page 7

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PHOTOS BY SOPHIA BALUNEK

Above, Josh Jackson steadies a roof beam as a crane lifts it onto the top of the pavilion structure. Below, from left, Steve Grunewald, Dan Opton and Rocky Martin nailing in the roof beams.

PAVILION

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location, Opton had to coordinate the site work, including the excavation, grading and the pouring of the concrete foundation. It's all involved multiple sub-contractors and procuring price estimates and putting out calls for bids.

The initial design concepts for the pavilion were created by the architecture firm Truex Collins and then modified by the committee and finalized with Timber-Homes Vermont, the company that created the frame.

"The thought was, let's not do a traditional gazebo that you see on every other town green in New England, so we wanted to do something that stood alone and had some character, and Timber-Homes of Vermont really brought it to life and added those like natural elements," Opton said.

What the crew put together this weekend has frame elements designed to mimic forking tree branches. It comes together in a "hip roof" shape — a rectangular base with a sloping four-sid-

ed roof. The pieces the crew put together this past weekend were pre-cut and assembled at Timber-Homes Vermont, then brought to Hinesburg. Someone from the company was on site to direct the raising.

On Sunday, after the frame was built, Opton returned with more volunteers to put in roof slats. Soon contractors will install a metal roof.

According to Opton the pavilion is about 90% to the finish line and will be done in the coming week.

The hope, with the pavilion and the space in general, is to give Hinesburg residents somewhere to gather. Right now, Opton noted, the summer concerts happen at the community school. Those, in the future, might happen on the town common.

While the pavilion is central to the overall design, the space is not yet complete. The committee still has plans for a playground, walking paths, a formal entryway and



more parking.

However, the completion of the pavilion is significant. The committee has been fundraising for the project for three years, and

the pavilion, an expensive line item, is the first real structure to go up beyond trees and planting.

"I've lived in a lot of different places before settling in Hines-

burg, I moved around a lot, and I kept coming back here, and I really felt like Hinesburg needed a center," Opton said.

Soon, it'll have one.