



THE KEENE SENTINEL



Democratic candidates for president Kirsten Gillibrand and Julián Castro stump in the region during the weekend. REGION, A3

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MONIFF MONADNOCK INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



MICHAEL MOORE / Sentinel Staff

Winners of the Jonathan Daniels Award at MONIFF — Sasha Friedlander, left, and Cynthia Wade — talk about the making of their documentary film “Grit” after a viewing at The Colonial Theatre Saturday night.

INSIDE

City ordinance would open some public parking spaces to food trucks. REGION, A6

KSC softball team sweeps, but its playoff fate is not in its own hands. SPORTS, B1

Tanglewood co-op agrees to buy park

Keene property has 328 home sites

By PAUL CUNO-BOOTH
Sentinel Staff

Residents of Tanglewood Estates voted last week to buy the Keene mobile-home community and manage it under cooperative ownership.

The 58-55 vote gives the cooperative 60 days to close on the purchase, Christopher Villeneuve, president of the co-op's board, said Saturday.

The co-op has already lined up financing, through a combination of loans and grants, he said.

“It feels really good, because if we are successful in this, and what our vision is, we’re gonna be keeping a nice hunk of affordable housing in the city of Keene,” he said. The park’s residents include veterans, senior citizens and people with disabilities, he said.

With the vote, the co-op comes one step closer to the end of a process kicked off late last year, when Michigan-based RHP Properties made a \$20 million offer to buy Tanglewood from its owner, Vancouver-based The Hynes Group. RHP owns more than 230 mobile-home communities in 24 states, according to its website.

New Hampshire law says mobile-home park owners must notify residents before a sale so they can make a purchase offer of their own, if they choose.

Residents of Tanglewood — a tree-lined community of 328 home sites — formed a co-op in December to explore a possible purchase.

Villeneuve said the co-op’s acquisition of the property will mean a \$6 increase in monthly rent. Any further increases will have to be approved by a vote.

RHP had promised to limit rent increases to \$14 annually. The current rent is \$549.

A few weeks ago, Villeneuve said, the co-op had been looking at a potentially higher rent hike. But after receiving information from other cooperative-owned communities about how they operate and keep costs down, the Tanglewood co-op was able to get to the \$6 figure.

Chris Rondeau, a Tanglewood resident, described last week’s meeting as somewhat contentious, with some people who were against the purchase

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Singled out

Disastrous mud flow at the heart of ‘Grit,’ film festival’s big award winner

By SIERRA HUBBARD
Sentinel Staff

Homes, schools, factories, mosques, burial grounds — all have been wiped away. More than a dozen Indonesian villages are encased in 130 feet of mud covering about two square miles.

The eruption 13 years ago that turned landscapes into eerily flat, barren wasteland is still flowing, and could continue for another decade.

A documentary on the destructive mud volcano — “Grit,” directed by Cynthia Wade and Sasha Friedlander — received the Jonathan Daniels Award at this year’s Monadnock International Film Festival. Sponsored by the Jonathan Daniels Center for Social Responsibility, the award recognizes a film that “demonstrates artistic excellence combined with awareness around a social justice issue,” according to the MONIFF website.

After the film’s screening Saturday night, Virginia Prescott — former N.H. Public Radio host and now a host with Georgia Public Broadcasting in Atlanta — moderated a discussion with the directors.

In 2006, a mud volcano erupted on the Indonesian island of Java. The

resulting torrents of mud eventually buried 16 villages in the Sidoarjo regency. According to “Grit,” scientists estimate the mud will continue flowing until around 2030.

The documentary follows two families among the roughly 60,000 citizens displaced by the mud flow. Told through the eyes of Harwati and her teenage daughter Dian, who was 6 when the mud erupted, “Grit” traces the disaster’s aftermath and the controversy surrounding its cause. Over the course of five years of filming, Dian finds her voice as an activist pursuing compensation for the refugees’ losses.

A 2008 international report blamed oil and gas drilling less than a mile from the eruption. According to the report, the company operating the well drilled too deep, which forced pressurized gas and underground mud up through a fault line, creating the mud volcano.

The Indonesian company that owned the well, PT Lapindo Brantas, has repeatedly denied it is responsible and blamed the mud flow on an earthquake that struck in the area two days prior.

At the post-viewing Q&A, Wade said she first heard about the mud flow in 2012, while directing a commercial in Indonesia. She spent a few days taking video and photos at the site, but felt that, to do the film justice, she needed

to find a partner familiar with the local language and culture.

At a film festival months later, she watched a documentary directed by Friedlander about sulfur miners in East Java. Friedlander, who’s fluent in the native language, spent time in Indonesia as a child and returned after her undergraduate studies to spend three years working as a local journalist.

The pair struck a deal in 2013 to begin work on “Grit.”

As documentarians, Wade said, they’re conscious of a perception of their genre as “eat your vegetables” films.

“It can feel punitive sometimes, like ‘sit down, watch this documentary,’” she said.

To buck that stereotype, Wade said they set out to make a feature-length film that could hold the audience’s attention throughout. Their challenge was to do that while telling a political and environmental story that featured mud — lots of mud.

The solution, Wade said, was to show, rather than tell, whenever possible, and she highlighted a device the filmmakers used in the documentary: the rising mud levels.

One subject in the film, a teacher and an artist, created several life-size

See DISASTROUS on Page A2

Legal marijuana fate rests in hands of the NH Senate

By ALEX LACASSE
Portsmouth Herald

CONCORD — The fate of recreational cannabis legalization this year now rests with New Hampshire’s 24 state senators.

HB 481, legalizing the commercial production and sale of adult-use marijuana products is being debated in the Senate Judiciary Committee with a public hearing continued to May 7.

Matt Simon, New England

political director with the Marijuana Policy Project, said without a veto-proof, two-thirds majority in the Senate and significant movement in the House from its 200-163 vote to pass the bill April 4, the vote would be mostly symbolic as Republican Gov. Chris Sununu has repeatedly said a legalization bill is dead on arrival on his desk. Simon said he now believes legalization is a “long shot” to pass this year.

“It’s still a little too early to

tell at this point ... the odds are stacked against legalization in the big picture this year,” he said. “The votes are there to pass it (in the Senate), but not by a two-thirds majority. There would have to be some kind of development to pick up more votes. New Hampshire is going to be an island of prohibition in part because the governor has completely removed himself from this process.”

Sen. Tom Sherman, D-Rye, said in order to increase the

likelihood of more of his fellow legislators supporting legalization, he has asked the chairman of the Judiciary Committee if he could draft an amendment to HB 481, which would initially ban the sale of edible cannabis products and THC-infused vaping liquid. THC, tetrahydrocannabinol, is the active chemical compound in cannabis.

Sherman said he wanted the legal cannabis market to be rolled out in a phased approach, similar

to how the state began its medicinal cannabis industry. He said it started with a narrow list of conditions eligible to be treated with cannabis and gradually expanded over time. He said by gradually introducing edible and vaping products, it would give regulators time to learn more how many people are using and if adolescent substance abuse was increasing prior to the products being

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DAILY DIGEST

SENTINEL WEATHER

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Disastrous mud flow at the heart of 'Grit,' film festival's Jonathan Daniels Award winner

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statues of people with arms outstretched and placed them in the mud. Prescott called them an "incredible barometer": Throughout the film, shots of the statues show them with mud up to their knees, their hips — eventually their chests.

"And now, by the way, the statues are under the mud completely," Wade said.

Though the disaster's cause is still technically debated, the directors deliberately decided against presenting balanced arguments on both sides. Wade said the film isn't meant to be unbiased: The documentary blames Lapindo's drilling for the disaster.

"And that was Dian's perspective and the villagers' perspective," she added. "It's also what we personally believe, so we put a stake in the ground."

But the filmmakers still sought input from Lapindo's

parent company, the Bakrie Group. For three years, Friedlander said, they got no answers from requests to interview Aburizal Bakrie, an Indonesian politician and principal of the Bakrie Group, one of the country's largest conglomerates.

A response finally came through as they were wrapping up the film and preparing to screen it in 2016. After a couple of meetings with Wade and Friedlander, Bakrie agreed to set aside a day for an interview. The filmmakers were given three weeks' notice, during which time they had to raise money for the trip to Indonesia — and for the security escort, and the kidnap and ransom insurance.

"It was dangerous," Wade said. "... We eventually got out; we were fine. But it was kind of hairy."

After the interview with Bakrie, they spent another eight months tearing the film apart, re-editing it, and putting it back together.

The directors still follow the situation and activism efforts. Last August, Friedlander said, the drilling company renewed a 20-year contract in Sidoarjo, despite the mudflow.

Wade said Dian, who is in her second year of college, studying law, won an Amnesty International award and spent a week in The Hague training and networking with activists. There are plans to organize underground screenings of "Grit" throughout Indonesia, since the Bakrie Group owns most of the country's television networks, Wade said.

At the end of the discussion, she announced that they are accepting donations for Dian's continued education.

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MICHAEL MOORE / Sentinel Staff

Daniel McGuire, director/producer of "Balian," and Amy Jenkins, director/producer of "Instructions on Parting," were two of five filmmakers on hand Saturday afternoon during a MONIFF panel on making documentaries.

Legal marijuana fate for 2019 rests in hands of the NH Senate

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allowed for sale.

"It's the edibles and vaping products that have the highest tendencies to be abused," said Sherman, who supports legalization. "As we gain experience with the industry we can consider broadening what is legal to be sold, we don't have to start with an all-in approach. "The governor is going to be less likely to veto if there are protections in place and it's a thoughtful bill, gradually expanding what can be purchased. Should the governor veto it, a bill that is gradual is more likely to pick up the maximum amount of support of in the legislature among people who are still on the fence."

Simon said he would be willing to accept some compromise on what cannabis products would be initially available for purchase in final legislation, so long as legalization is passed. He said he has not yet approached any members of the state House of Representatives to gauge the willingness of the no-votes to flip.

According to the proposed legalization bill, it would allow any

person age 21 and older to legally possess up to one ounce of cannabis and up to five grams of THC concentrate in public. Individuals also would be allowed to cultivate up to six plants, with up to three being mature, and households would be allowed up to 12 plants. The bill makes consuming cannabis in public punishable with a \$100 fine. Anyone previously convicted of possessing or growing an amount of cannabis, considered legal under the proposed legislation, and would be eligible to have their conviction annulled.

According to the state's cannabis study commission's annual revenue projections, legal cannabis could earn the state \$15.2 million to \$26.9 million on the low end of estimates and \$32.7 million to \$57.7 million on the high end. According to the bill's text, 29 percent of revenue would be allocated for voluntary substance abuse programs, 33 percent for broad-based aid to municipalities and 33 percent to the state general fund, with the remaining funds being paid to the proposed Cannabis Control Commission to regulate the market and to state agencies to pay for the hiring of more drug recognition experts.

New Hampshire is now surrounded by legal marijuana with Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont and Canada, all having legalized. However, Vermont did not legalize the commercial sale of cannabis products.

Among several other Seacoast senators, the willingness to vote in favor of legalization was mixed.

Sen. James Gray, R-Rochester, said he did not support legalization because cannabis remains a Schedule I narcotic at the federal level, along with heroin, LSD and other substances with no perceived medical benefits and a high tendency for abuse.

"If people want me to soften my position, they can go to Washington and get (cannabis) off the Schedule I list," Gray said. "If New Hampshire residents want to buy it, it's a short drive to do what they want to do. There's going to be more marijuana available no matter what now that it's decriminalized to three-quarters of an ounce, it's not a big deal anymore."

Sen. David Watters, D-Dover, said he would "likely" support the legalization bill because he is "reluctantly" accepting the reality of marijuana products purchased

legally in Massachusetts and Maine would be flooding into the state and could create an impracticality for law enforcement to stop.

The New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police opposes cannabis legalization.

"What is a Dover officer supposed to do? Stop every car at the border and check for legally purchased marijuana? It's a law enforcement impossibility," Watters said. "I respect our law enforcement; we have the best of any state, but they face the issue of resource allocation. In the midst of the opioid crisis, is enforcing the cannabis prohibition what they want to spend their time on? I understand there is a will to enforce the this, but is there a way?"

Watters added he had some reservations about the bill ensuring funds for treatment and prevention, especially for minors.

Sen. Jon Morgan, D-Brentwood, said he was undecided on how he would vote. He said he needed to be convinced there were enough safeguards in place to prevent children and adolescents from accessing products and funding prevention and abuse programs. He said there were several outstanding issues, such as

cannabis businesses not being able to use the banking system that he needs further clarification on. He said he found data showing a "substantive" correlation in states that have legalized and saw a reduction in opiate overdose deaths "very compelling."

"It is not a top issue for me," Morgan said. "I approach this as a father with three boys and I want to make sure they're protected. I'm cognizant these decisions aren't made in a vacuum because what our neighboring states have done."

Sen. Martha Fuller Clark, D-Portsmouth, did not respond to a request for comment on this story.

Kate Frey, executive director of New Futures, a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for the health and wellness of the state's children, said her organization's biggest opposition to legalization is commercialized marijuana setting up shop in the state. She said she is concerned the bill does not adequately address preventing access to cannabis products by minors. She is also concerned that money to be allocated for treatment would go the route of the state alcohol fund and become a piggy bank of sorts for the Legislature.

Keene medical marijuana facility eyes fall opening

By LIORA ENGEL-SMITH
Sentinel Staff

The medical marijuana dispensary planned for Keene is slated to open sometime this fall, following a months-long process to bring a therapeutic cannabis center to Cheshire County.

The clinic will occupy unit 1 at 69 Island St., which was previously a doctor's office. The 2,400-square-foot center is in a complex with medical and dental practices.

Ted Rebholz, founder and CEO of Temescal Wellness, which will operate the dispensary once it opens,

said renovations to the space will begin as soon as possible.

Temescal already has dispensaries in Dover and Lebanon, as well as in Massachusetts and Maryland.

However, before the Keene dispensary can open, state law dictates the city and the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services reach out to patients and caregivers and solicit public input. Department spokesman Jake Leon said in an email Thursday the state and the dispensary will hold a public meeting to gather this feedback, but a date and time have not yet been determined.

Representatives from the city were not available Thursday to discuss the outreach plans.

New Hampshire's medical marijuana law, which has been in effect since 2013, legalized the use of cannabis for a limited number of medical conditions and with strict permitting. It authorized four dispensaries across the state, which led to the opening of facilities in Lebanon and Plymouth, both in Grafton County; Dover, in Strafford County; and Merrimack, in Hillsborough County.

But the location of these clinics means Cheshire County residents have to

travel far to get their prescriptions filled. The two closest options for people in the Monadnock Region are the dispensaries in Merrimack, almost 50 miles from Keene, and in Lebanon, nearly 70 miles away.

The Keene dispensary will change that and may mean patients who are eligible for medical marijuana but couldn't get to the other dispensaries will try it, Rebholz said in January.

Temescal received approval from the state to operate the new dispensary in Cheshire County after Gov. Chris Sununu signed a bill to that effect in May. Sen. Jay Kahn, D-Keene,

introduced an amendment to include a dispensary in either Cheshire or Sullivan counties into the bill, which initially allowed only for the establishment of a new dispensary in Carroll, Coos or Grafton counties.

Data from the state's therapeutic cannabis program show the number of local residents who use medical marijuana is growing. Between July 2017 and June 2018, almost 700 residents from the two counties had medical marijuana cards, up from nearly 400 in the previous year. That trend mirrors the growth in registered medical marijuana users in the state.

ABOUT THE SENTINEL

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Tanglewood co-op agrees to buy the park

(Continued from Page A1)

frustrated after the close vote. He said he's a strong supporter of the cooperative purchasing the park.

"I think the co-op is gonna be great, because we have the say in when we want to fix things and how we want to fix things," Rondeau said.

He said he thinks some people were attracted to RHP's offer, believing that the company would quickly repair the roads and make other improvements. Rondeau said the co-op won't be able to fix everything overnight, but trusts local ownership to take better care of the park than an out-of-state corporation.

Rondeau was one of a handful of residents who said they're frustrated with the state of the park's infrastructure, and think the co-op will do a better job maintaining it.

Tanglewood residents Sue Wood and Vinson Stoddard Sr. said they are happy about co-op ownership, in part because they think it'll be more accountable to residents and keep costs down. "If it hadn't passed, I would probably sell this place and get out of here," Stoddard said.

Not everyone agreed. Donna, a Tanglewood resident who asked that her last name not be printed, said she worries improvements will be costly and said a company that has

owned other parks would be better equipped to handle them. "I'd rather have someone buy it who's used to running one," she said.

Another resident, who declined to have his name printed, said he opposed the co-op purchase because he felt the financing numbers "didn't add up."

Several other residents approached by The Sentinel on Saturday said they hadn't really been following the issue, or would have been fine with either outcome.

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