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Mario Ratzki Reports from Concord: August 2013

House reconvenes in September

By Mario Ratzki, NH House Representative

An interesting fact of legislative rule is that a defeated bill cannot simply be reintroduced in the following year, without substantial changes. The Gaming Commission now meeting in Concord, with members appointed by the Governor, the Senate, and the House Speaker, is working to address some of the issues that caused the casino bill to fail last time, especially what some saw as inadequate revenues for the state. The House Speaker told me that it was her duty as Speaker to be sure that a new bill would respect the "substantial changes" requirement. To be continued . . .

The Medicaid Expansion Commission continues to look into the pros and cons of joining the Affordable Care Act. We will vote on its recommendation, probably in October.

I would be remiss not to mention the controversy surrounding Senate President Peter Bragdon taking over as CEO of the Local Government Center (LGC). With all due respect to the Senator, it is hard to see how this position does not present a clear conflict of interest. With the LGC in violation of several state laws regarding its failure to redistribute earnings to towns, among other things, the Senate president cannot help being involved in a myriad of ways affecting relevant legislation. [After this article was written, Bragdon announced plans to resign as Senate President.]

HB660, the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) labeling bill, is being studied in subcommittee and will probably come up for a vote in January. This is a bill I support, so that people can make an informed choice of what they want or do not want to eat.

My committee, Public Works and Highways, under Chairman David

Campbell (D Nashua), was invited to the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Memorial Bridge between Portsmouth and Kittery, Maine. The committee is in charge of the capital budget which allocated \$30 million for the bridge construction (in bonded, i.e. borrowed, funds). Maine paid \$30 million and the Feds paid \$20 million.

House members will begin to reconvene in September for the introduction of new bills. The last day for introducing bills is September 27, and the bills must be finalized by November 15. I am happy to entertain bills that will benefit our towns, our elderly, our schools, and our farmers.

Talking about farms, Huntoon Farm in Danbury has grass-fed beef and also serves ice cream. Ragged View Farm in Andover has tasty pork, and so does Henwyn Farm in Salisbury (as well as piglets), and our own Peter Zak is holding his Apple Fest on Saturday, September 28 on Maple Street.

Saturday, September 28, is also the last day of the Wilmot Farmers Market, which features many of our local farmers, including Katherine Darling. I am committed to our local farms; please do not hesitate to contact me to highlight some of your products.

In other farm news, I am happy to report that the slaughterhouse in Barnstead is progressing toward USDA approval.

I also want to mention the Salisbury Historical Society concert on Sunday, September 8, at 4 PM at the Old Baptist Meeting House in Salisbury. The Atlantic Trio will be playing Johann Sebastian Bach to raise money for scholarships. Tickets are \$15, with complimentary wine and cheese served. The acoustics are fantastic. This is an event worth supporting.

I am available at 735-5440, but prefer e-mails at MarioRatzki@gmail.com.

It's Time To Check Your Heating System

Andover Fire Chief Rene Lefebvre urges everyone to heed this advice!

Heating season will soon be here. This is the time to check your heating systems. Having your heating system checked by a qualified professional will help ensure that the system is ready to operate safely and efficiently.

Heating unit fires are still the number one cause of fires in New Hampshire, and they are preventable. Heating fires are often the result of improper installation, use, or maintenance of supplemental home heating appliances such as

wood stoves, coal stoves, and kerosene space heaters. The use of these supplemental heating devices also increases the risk of dangerous accumulation of carbon monoxide in the home if not properly installed and maintained. Now is the time to have them checked.

It is critical that every home has interconnected smoke alarms on each floor level and that every family should develop and practice a home fire escape plan. Smoke alarms should be tested monthly. Matches and lighters should be kept out of the reach of children at all times.

For further information concerning home fire safety, contact your local fire department or the office of the State Fire Marshal at 271-3294.

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