

Letters

Assessing Area Political Figures

Kent Hackmann

The annual Danbury Grange Day on Saturday, September 9, included, as it had in the past, the tents of the Merrimack Republican Steering Committee and the Danbury-Salisbury-Andover Democrats. Louise Andrus (announced candidate for House District 1) and Natalie Wells (2016-18 representative for House District 25) presided over the GOP tent. Ken Wells (current representative for House District 1) and David Karrick (current, re-elected representative for House District 25) talked with interested persons at the Democratic tent.

For me, a highlight was the parade. The teams of oxen, with a progression in sizes, reminded me of Donald Hall's book, *Ox Cart Man*. The competitive teams in the bedstead race provided excitement and drew considerable attention. The plentiful food (I enjoyed the pulled pork) nourished the hungry. Lindsey Schust and the Ragged Mounted Band entertained the crowd with her ever-popular numbers.

Readers of the Beacon in recent months may have noticed my letters and my purpose of commenting on the local politics. I aim at pointing up the position that our respective candidates take, particularly on matters pertaining to the town. In doing that, I ask questions to elicit further information on matters that the candidates themselves have mentioned in their respective letters. The questions will, I hope, encourage a civil, informed conversation between the candidates and with the Beacon's readers.

Louise Andrus has written that she is an avid Trump supporter and a champion of Second Amendment rights. She staunchly opposes all legislation that she judges to be a tax on income. As for K-12 public education, she declared that education and school children are

her passion. She supports the Governor's vetoes of measures that involve a tax on income or businesses and those that, in her opinion, impinge on Second Amendment rights.

Ken Wells, a moderate Democrat, as I understand his reports, sees the big picture. He champions the role of Andover, Salisbury, and Danbury as the "number one producer of high-value forestry products and biomass wood chips for the entire state." And he works to represent the interests of everyone in the towns "for whom forestry helps put food on their families' tables." In August, he wrote "in my vision of the proper role of government, all that money [spent by local businesses] is spent to benefit the people and small businesses of our towns and state, building and improving our roads and schools, and protecting all of us from outside threats like the opioid crisis."

He does not like the burden of local property taxes and the way legislative decisions have downshifted taxes to the towns and failed to provide "adequacy" in school funding. The Governor vetoed the budget that included "significant increases in state funding for our schools and more than \$60,000 in relief for Andover property taxpayers," once again missing the chance for tax relief.

I respectfully suggest that Ken Wells, along with David Karrick, has brought a high level of competence to the legislative process. For that, I believe they should be commended. While readers may disagree with them on specific bills, I suspect that most readers find their reports in the Beacon sensible and persuasive. I hope readers will come forward with their own opinions.

Louise Andrus, in the online posting of this issue of the *Beacon*, reminisces about her years at Andover High School. She contributes to our local history, as has my neighbor Rita Norander's rec-

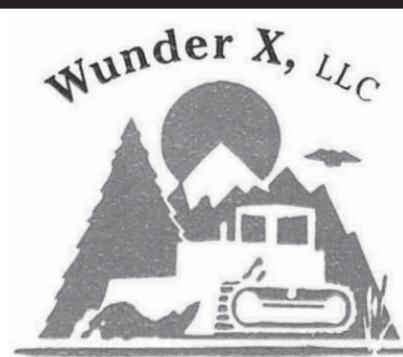
ollections, yesteryear, of her family in East Andover.

In her last paragraph, Louis Andrus shifted topics when she wrote that "Andover citizens should be proud of ... the independence to control their elementary school." That seemed to come out of the blue. What is the issue? I wonder what she means by "the independence to control" at Andover Elementary/Middle School.

I hope, for the November issue of

the Beacon, that Louise Andrus will explain her meaning and, at the same time, respond to the many unanswered questions that I have asked about her statements of opinion in her letters to the Beacon.

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is, "away".

It would be reasonable to expect that after the Governor's veto, budget negotiations would proceed somewhat similarly to the way you or I might bargain over the price of a used car: One side makes an offer, the other says "no" and makes a compromise counter-offer, and then the parties repeat this back-and-forth until an agreement is reached, or the prospective buyer walks away. Through his veto of the budget, the Governor has merely said, "no", but has not followed up with a serious compromise counter-offer. It seems he is taking a page from Washington's brinkmanship playbook, "walking away" and maneuvering our state toward a government shut-down. At the end of the month

the state will be without an operating budget, so our towns will be unable to write their town budgets and set reasonable tax rates that would have included monies from the state. A shutdown will also hurt state workers and others who depend on the state for their paychecks. I can only guess that Governor Sununu is willing to insist on his tax breaks for out-of-state corporations because he is less concerned about the people of New Hampshire - those state workers, our Andover forestry workers and those on family medical leave, whose paychecks are going to take the hit - than he is about currying favor out-of-state.

As always, if you would like to share your thoughts or tell me about something you think I ought to know, please call me at home at 735-5756 or email me at kenwells3@gmail.com.