

# All gather March 3

(Continued from page 30.)

out to \$1,126,078.03 — a figure higher than what was budgeted.

General fund expenses like property maintenance of Shadow Lake dam and town properties are all expected to be lower than last year, totaling \$181,645.

The office salaries and benefits budget has increased slightly to \$223,846, though not by much

compared to the figure approved for 2025: \$214,563.

The cost of emergency services has also increased for all three categories listed — fire department, Glover ambulance, and public safety — totaling \$109,856. The sum of these and other general fund expenses comes out to \$878,539 for 2026.

## Winter Swimming Festival returns to Newport

On the weekend of February 20, 113 winter swimmers and 40 volunteers will be descending on Newport for the Twelfth Annual Memphremagog Winter Swimming Festival. Swimmers will be making their pilgrimage to Lake Memphremagog from Mexico, Canada, and 22 states and territories. Registration is now closed.

Swimmers range in age from 18 to 86. One is a former Olympic medalist in the back stroke. Another is a single mom participating in her very first winter swimming event. Eight have swum the 25-mile length of Lake Memphremagog, 3 of whom have completed a 50-mile double cross.

The festival is held at the EastSide Restaurant in Newport in a two lane, 25-meter pool cut in the

ice by Michael Booth of Irasburg and his “Boyz of Winter.” It is the only winter swimming pool cut in the ice in all of the Americas. Water temperatures typically run at 30.5 Fahrenheit (think microscopic slushy).

Cutting of the pool will begin on Wednesday, February 18, or Thursday, February 19. Newport Mayor Rick Ufford-Chase will cut the ribbon to open the pool. Michael Booth and his two sons will launch a three potato gun salute and the local “Sharkbait Sheilas” will “test” the pool to see if it’s cold enough for an official winter swimming event.

The Memphremagog Winter Swimming Festival is now held in conjunction with Newport’s Winter Festival. — from Kingdom Games.

## Leach Public Library receives children’s book grant

The Leach Public Library is pleased to announce that it has received a matching children’s book grant from The Pilcrow Foundation, expanding the library’s collection for young readers.

Through Pilcrow’s matching grant program, the library raised \$400 locally and expected to receive approximately \$1,200 worth of books. Instead, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of donor sponsors, the library received over \$1,900 worth of new books.

A total of 65 books were sponsored by Aaron Caplan of Iowa. In addition, the library received two donor-sponsored themed collections: 20 math and science books donated by Hal Berenson and Laura Ackerman of Colorado, and 17 health and wellness books donated by Dr. Bill Strawbridge and Dr. Meg Wallhagen of California. The health, math, and science non-fiction books are especially important for updating and expanding the library’s non-fiction selections.

This is the second time the Leach

library has been awarded a grant from the Pilcrow Foundation, and the support goes a long way toward offsetting rising operating costs.

The \$400 local match was raised by friends and family of Brady Metcalf, a lifelong Irasburg resident who died recently. The library is honored to recognize this gift, and all books purchased through the local match will include a bookplate in Mr. Metcalf’s memory, ensuring his legacy lives on through the joy of reading.

The new books will be enjoyed not only by families who visit the library independently, but also by students from the local village school, who regularly walk to the library for scheduled visits as part of their school experience.

Community members are invited to visit the Leach Public Library to explore the new books as they are added to the shelves.

For more information, visit [leachpubliclibrary.org](http://leachpubliclibrary.org). — from the Leach Public Library.

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