

News from the Desk of the Town Administrator

By Stephen Halleran

Town Meeting

Thank you to all of you that took the time to attend and participate in town meeting. Sticking to the work load was particularly difficult as it was a glorious weather day with cobalt blue skies and temps well into the 40's. Despite the weather, the business of the day was completed in about four hours, which included a couple of breaks and an opportunity to have lunch. Articles 5 and 6 concerning powers of the Conservation Commission resulted in the most discussion, mainly due to a difficult to understand state law and unfortunately a rather poor and confused explanation of the law for which I take responsibility. These articles were at the request of the Conservation Commission and I simply had not focused enough time and energy at fully understanding them. In the end, it was Yankee wisdom and common sense from the floor of town meeting that prevailed when Ruth Wheeler and Kesaya Noda reminded us all that in the end it was about whether or not we trust our public officials, in this case the Conservation Commission, to use our public monies wisely. Put in those terms the articles immediately passed by wide margins demonstrating once again the value of town meeting discussion and debate.

Based on the approved spending at town and school meeting we do not anticipate any increase in either the town or school tax rate. If the county is able to hold the line and we don't lose any promised revenues we should be able to achieve a combined tax rate at or below the current level of \$22/\$1,000.

Focus now moves to the various projects that were discussed. Concerning town operations, pavement maintenance and more specifically the Willow Brook Road will continue to be a real challenge. Besides pursuing state Hazard Mitigation Funding for the roadway, we have also inquired about the availability of Federal Recovery Act stimulus funds. Certainly the brook road is "shovel ready" unfortunately the filter at the state level doesn't seem to be allowing a lot of New Hampshire's money to reach local highway departments.

Tax Assessments

April 1st also brings with it tax assessment and abatement time. Pick up work as its called on new projects will commence in early May with property inspections and measuring and listing of new homes, additions and outbuildings. We received a relatively low number of tax abatements, 26 or just fewer than 2% of the properties. This is a very low number of appeals in an update year. Avitar Associates will, as part of the '08 update contract, be working on these in the coming weeks.

If you own forestry land in current use the town office may be contacting you in the coming months about updating your Forestry Maintenance Plan. Forestland enrolled in the responsible stewardship program must have an updated plan every five years.

Solid Waste Management

The possibility of being able to use single stream technology for sorting of the curbside recycling has the potential to significantly reduce our collection costs. For most of the years that we have done curbside recycling our system has involved sorting the materials at the curb into a compartmentalized truck. It's cool to watch but very expensive to do. Onsite sorting is very labor and capital intensive and has effectively limited the pool of competitors for the collection work to one company in our area. The City of Lebanon is now investigating and may well begin accepting single stream or commingled recyclables in bulk. Preliminary discussions seem to indicate that Lebanon would have strong interest in receiving our materials. If this is the case, our curbside collection process becomes virtually identical to our waste collection process which should significantly reduce the time it takes to complete the recycling routes and open the work up to more competitors. In affect all that will be required is a strong back and a self-unloading truck. We are in a great position to consider this change, as our current collection arrangement is a year-to-year deal giving us good flexibility to make modifications to our deal or even switch to a different vendor. It's still very early in this process, but hopefully by late summer we will have more information on this issue.

If you have not had an opportunity to do so, consider using the Lebanon drop off recycling facility for items that we don't accept in the curbside program. The staff is fully aware that Plainfield residents are permitted and it's a great way to save money and to participate in reducing the amount of materials that go into the landfill space. The city's website lists all the accepted materials and rules for using the facility just click to www.lebcity.com and under city departments click on the recycling center link.

Think spring, and if you have a question or a concern that the town office can help with please stop in and see us.

Stephen Halleran