

News from the Desk of the Town Administrator
By Stephen Halleran

2009 Tax Rate: On October 16th, pending a final state office review, the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration established the 2009 Plainfield tax rate at \$22.00/\$1,000. The 2008 rate was also \$22.00/\$1,000 meaning of course that there is no tax rate increase this year. The town rate went from \$3.80 to \$4.24, the county from \$2.55 to \$2.79, state school from \$2.25 to \$2.19 and final the local school from \$13.40 to \$12.78. The School District deserves credit for completing their year well within their approved appropriation. From the town's portion, \$.11 of the increase (\$30,000) was a result of not receiving revenues from the state that had been promised but were not delivered. Additionally, included in the town rate is \$.25 that the Selectboard added to the tax rate, which raised some \$70,000 for the town's fund balance. Basically, rather than let the rate drop below \$22 to its natural outcome of \$21.75 the board felt that it was in the town's overall best interest to hold the rate level and use the opportunity to add monies to fund balance. This insures that in years when the rate rises, funds are available to soften the increase. By example a town of Plainfield's expenditure size (school, town, county) is recommended to have a fund balance of between \$344,000 and \$686,000. As of the end of last year our audited fund balance stood at \$405,000. Our standing goal is to be right in the middle of the range, so in this case about \$515,000. As a result of the Selectmen's action at this year's rate setting we should complete the 2009 audit with a fund balance of around \$475,000. Some will undoubtedly disagree with a decision that results in a higher rate that would be the absolute lowest tax rate possible. In response, I say that every board of Selectmen I have worked for has held insuring the town's long-term financial health as one of its highest priorities. These types of bold decision are absolutely in line with that goal. There is a whole bunch of things we don't do as well as we'd like to, but we can assure you that your not going to open up the local paper to find that your town's in a financial mess or has a deficit to pay off. Any Selectboard can set a tax rate or two at pretty much any rate they think you want. It's as simple as over estimating revenues or deferring expenses, but as the state and federal government has found out, sooner or later the bill comes home to be paid. In myview Plainfield residents are fortunate to have Selectboard members who are thinking conservatively for the long-term.

Hi Speed Internet Expansion: We are continuing with our efforts to convince Comcast to expand its coverage area in town. The cable company now has our GIS mapping data and will begin to survey areas for possible expansion. So again, if you live in a neighborhood that might be a good candidate for this, don't wait for us to find you, the squeaky wheel gets the grease or in this case the bandwidth.

2009 Budget Process: The Selectmen are meeting with the School Board on November 4th here at the town offices at 7pm which will kick off the unofficial start of our budgeting process. The goal is to discuss any big-ticket items that either board is planning for the next few years. Our Finance Committee has been invited and of course any resident that wishes to attend is welcome. In these economic times we need all the good ideas we can get.

Stephen Halleran

