

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of April 19, 2013

Preamble: “Colchester, Vermont, located on Lake Champlain’s Malletts Bay, is a diverse, civic-minded community endowed with a rich heritage of commercial, agricultural, recreational, and educational gifts. Proud of the quality of life already enjoyed here, the people of Colchester seek to build upon this foundation to ensure economic prosperity, recreational opportunity, and an entrepreneurial spirit for future generations” – Vision Statement, Heritage Project, 2012.

By no means a total representation of all the work performed by the Town the following information highlights some activities which occurred:

Burnham Memorial Library: Hannah Peacock, Assistant Director

This week at the library, we had our first Preschool Music with Mr. Chris; every Wednesday at 1 pm, he'll bring his brand of musical fun to the library. In partnership with the Celebrate Colchester 250 Committee, we officially unveiled our Colchester Anniversary library cards; if you have not signed up for one yet, we still have a limited number available. In other news, the Library Trustees are currently in the process of selecting our next director. As part of that process, the candidates will be making a short presentation which the public is encouraged to attend. The presentations are tentatively scheduled for the end of April/beginning of May, but more information will be forthcoming.

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

Nothing to report.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

Nothing to report.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Rescue responded to 19 EMS calls, and transported 16 people to the hospital. We also provided two advanced care intercepts to surrounding communities, and only turned over one call while on another.

Nothing to report from the Technical Rescue Team this week.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

In the Recreation Division, scheduling of athletic fields for the spring and summer season has our Assistant Director quite busy. Between the Little League baseball and softball, Spring Soccer, Youth Lacrosse, Adult Softball, Middle School Baseball and Men’s League Baseball there are many different groups trying to use our facilities this spring and summer season. The challenge of course is to be sure that no double booking takes place and hope for sunny skies as make up games are quite difficult to schedule. This level of use also challenges our Parks Division to make sure that all of the fields are ready

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and safe for play.

Coordination of the 250th Charter Day activities continues and registrations for the new 5k/15K Causeway Run are continuing to flood in. We are limiting the race to 200 racers and we are about half way there so if you are thinking about joining us then get that registration form in soon.

In the Parks Division, staff is cleaning up around all the municipal buildings and preparing the athletic fields. Bathrooms in the parks will be opened either this weekend or on Monday. Colchester Middle School baseball has been using field #2 at Airport Park and so the crew has been spending more time than normal making sure that field is ready to go.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

Nothing to report.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The Planning and Zoning Office would like to remind all business owners that temporary signs need to be renewed annually. If you have not done so, please contact our office to renew your temporary sign permit. Please be reminded that violations of the sign regulations can result in the non-renewal of temporary sign permits for a one-year period.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

When are property taxes due? Property taxes are due 3 times a year, August 15th, November 15th and March 15th. If the 15th falls on a holiday or weekend the taxes are due the following business day.

When are property taxes late? When they are not received on the 15th or postmarked by the U.S. postal service by the 15th. The penalty is 8% and the interest amount is 1%. The rates are set by the town charter. The town charter is in the process of being reviewed and we are recommending that the penalty amount be reduced, due to many requests from the taxpayers.

How can you pay? You can pay by check, cash, money order, escrow, auto-debit or credit card. The auto-debit needs to be set up in advance of the due date. It is a program where we debit your account on the day taxes are due for the amount that is due. We currently debit more than a million dollars from approximately 400 taxpayers each installment. Please contact us if you are interested in automating your tax payment at 264-5520.

Escrow payments that are made with your monthly mortgage payment is another service that is popular with taxpayers. We collect \$2.2 million dollars from 1672 taxpayers each installment.

Due to requests from taxpayers we recently added the ability to pay by credit card. There is a fee to the taxpayer for the convenience. The fee is 2.6%. The credit card company is not able to cut off the payments at the end of the business day so you are able to pay with a credit card up until midnight. If you pay with a credit card after midnight a penalty and interest amount will be assessed.

In order to be equitable to all taxpayers we are now accepting payments that are dropped after hours in the drop box. The payments must be made on the 15th. Payments that are received in the drop box after the 15th are considered late and a penalty and interest amount will be assessed.

We do listen to your requests to change the way we do business, and we adopt new methods of payment when possible, but in the end if you are late, we are not able to waive penalty and interest.

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Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

The preparations for the 2013 Grand List is ongoing. We are conducting field inspections on all properties that have building permits. These inspections will continue until all neighborhoods in town have been reviewed. The data collected in the field will then be entered into the evaluation software and reviewed. Notices of any changes to assessments due to permits resulting in physical changes to a property will be sent out at the end of May 2013.

Finance – Joan Boehm (Asst. Town Manager/CFO)

The Colchester financial statements for FY 12 have been available for review for several months on our web site. These statements provide a wealth of information about the financial condition of the Town. They include the auditor's report which found us to be in compliance with governmental accounting standards. There is a section called Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A). This indicates important changes that have occurred in the last year and makes comparisons of with FY 11. Following the MD&A are schedules A and B which present the financial position of the Town on an accrual basis. Schedules C and D present the financial information on a fund basis using the modified accrual basis of accounting. The accrual basis of accounting recognizes the financial effect of transactions when they occur, regardless of the timing or the related cash flows. The modified accrual basis of accounting recognizes revenues when they are available and expenditures when the liability has occurred. There are 23 pages of footnotes that explain in more detail information about the various accounts of the Town. After the footnotes are 19 more pages of more detailed schedules, including a budget vs actual schedule for the General Fund. Please check out our financial statements on our website. You may call Joan Boehm at 264-5502 if you have any questions or would like a better understanding of any part of the financial statements.

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

There are two news items to report this week. The first is to note that Colchester has once again been cited as one of the best communities in New England in which to live. To learn more please link to this site: <http://m.golocalprov.com/news/new-englands-best-cities-2013>. In the past year according to this analysis Colchester has moved from a number eighth position to number sixth – ahead of Burlington. The Town's ranking is due to many factors some of which are made possible by organizations/institutions located in our Town and the educational attainments of the Town's citizens. But most factors related to work performed by the municipality itself: low crime rate, quality of its public schools, walkability, parks and recreation programs & public libraries. The community should be proud that its tax dollars have created and improved Colchester's quality of life to sustain the community's economic wellbeing and people's property values.

The second and no less significant event, because of the aspirations of the people involved, today was "Town office moving day". Thanks to the very skilled help of people from the Department of Corrections several offices were moved to address the incoming Town Manager's re-organization of office functionality. People should know that whatever the tragic circumstances that brought these Corrections people to a period of incarceration, they are excellent workers and skilled movers and

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furniture makers. After they have paid “their debt to society” these people need to be afforded a chance to participate and contribute to the State’s welfare. To do this they need our support to successfully reintegrate into Vermont’s society and workforce.

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