

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of December 7, 2012

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: Rubi Simon, Director

At Burnham Library, we'd like to thank everyone who came out for the tree lighting on Sunday - we had a great turnout, and everything came together for the event. We'd also like to thank all of the staff and volunteers who made it possible, along with Ted Ryan in the Parks Department, who puts the lights up on the tree every year. We've had cookies and warm cider at the front desk all week, which are always popular with both kids and adults. As in past years, we're collecting socks for the Refugee Resettlement Program, so please bring them in for our sock tree. Finally, there are still two more drop-in holiday story times for kids, on Tuesday (Dec. 11th and 18th) at 10:30 am, and we'd love to see you there.

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

Nothing new to report.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

Colchester Police Officers were busy on a variety of fronts over the past week. Investigators are working on leads on a string of burglaries to commercial buildings. These burglaries may be related to the two armed robberies that occurred last week. Colchester Police are working with investigators in neighboring agencies who have experienced similar crimes in their jurisdictions.

Patrol personnel assisted our partners at Malletts Bay Fire Department at a significant fire at Brown Ledge Camp over the weekend. Cpl. Michael Cannon responded with the police department boat and supplied needed water to the on-shore firefighters. A well-coordinated effort by all those involved helped keep the fire from spreading further. Two teenage males who took responsibility for the fire while playing with flares and other items will appear before the Colchester Reparative Board.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Nothing to report.

For further information or comment, please call June Campbell at 264-5509.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The past few weeks have been extremely busy in the Recreation Department, you can tell the holidays are vastly approaching because our office elves are getting ready for all of our upcoming events. The elves have been busy sending letters to the North Pole for Santa to distribute to those in Colchester that registered for Letters from Santa and those children should be receiving them next week! We also are looking forward to our annual Breakfast with Santa on Saturday, December 15th. This program is always a season favorite and usually fills with 200 attendees. Also, big news in the Recreation Department is we have completed our Winter Brochure and it is at the printers. The brochures should be arriving in your mailboxes during the week of December 17th prior to the holidays so keep an eye out...we also have an early bird registration discount so register early once you receive your brochure. This would make a great holiday present to give to a loved one. We also offer gift cards.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

As a follow up to last week's report on the status of the Town's MS4 Storm Water Permit, Commissioner Mears has now signed the permit and released it for review. We, along with the other MS4 communities from Chittenden County have begun the process of performing a detailed line by line review of the 45 page federal permit, along with a 57 page response summary. The MS4 communities have 30 days to complete this process and to determine whether the permit conditions are acceptable, or whether an appeal should be filed.

The department recently secured a \$140,000 federal grant for the planned multi-use path along West Lakeshore Drive, from Church Road to Prim Road. With a total of \$280,000 available in funding from this particular grant program, there were a total of six Chittenden County municipalities who submitted applications totaling \$1 million. The grant funds were split 50/50 between Colchester and Essex Junction.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The Planning and Zoning Department warned a public hearing for Supplement 32 to the Zoning Regulations. This supplement will institute a new type of zoning, called form based code, at the Severance Corners Growth Center. It is hoped that this code encourages development that is like a traditional downtown with a mix of uses and higher residential densities. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on December 11th at 7PM at the Meeting House on these changes.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

The Town Clerk's Office is dressed for the holiday season with a new seasonal quilt on display. The elves are busy with processing new mortgages in the land records and cleaning our work shop from the busy election and tax seasons.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

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The Assessor's Office is continuing the reorganization of the property records. We are looking forward to completing the project and implementing the new record retention schedule.

There is 1 appeal remaining from the 2011 reappraisal to the State Appraiser. The appeal is scheduled later this month.

We are anticipating receiving the yearly State Equalization Study this month. The Equalization Study calculates the Town's Common Level of Assessment (CLA). Once received it will be reviewed and a recommendation will be made on whether the Town should accept the States finding or whether we should seek reconsideration.

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

On Tuesday, December 11 at the Select Board meeting, I will present the FY 14 General Fund budget using a Power Point presentation. I will explain the reasons for an increase in the municipal tax rate of 1.5 cents to \$0.5680. This was a difficult budget process as the last several years have been. We made a significant change to health insurance funding that allowed us to balance the budget more easily. We will also be reducing our use of the Fund Balance from \$135,000 to \$63,000 in FY 14. This reduction is to maintain a reserve for potential disasters or unexpected large expenses.

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

This week is one of many to come in the months ahead signifying the changes that are coming to Colchester not only in the next year but in the decade to come. As noted in the newspaper, Colchester's renowned Burnham Memorial Library Director is leaving Colchester for the directorship of Burlington's Fletcher Free Library. Before I leave as Town Manager, I anticipate that the Town will lose another of its municipal leaders. These changes are all normal in the life cycle of human activities. There are no constants. Those leaving are just individual changes within an evolving social fabric called "community".

As "one of the pulled threads" of Colchester's community fabric, I will not be appointing replacements to leaving directors. I am leaving that to the next Town Manager because it is important that that person choose the people s/he will work with in the future. What I will do in conjunction with the Town's Manager of Human Resources, Sherry LaBarge, is review and update job descriptions and advertise for these positions. Sherry with the assistance of other municipal officials will screen and interview the best candidates to narrow down the applicant pool to "best fit" candidates from which the next Town Manager can make an appointment. I am doing this to lessen the time of disruption that occurs to departmental cohesion resulting from the uncertainty in a lack of stable leadership.

In looking towards the long range future, James Ehlers, Chair of CEDAC, and Tom Mulcahy, Chair of the Planning Commission, and I met with US Senator Sanders' staff to brief them on the Town's initiatives to examine under the Heritage Project ways to improve the amenities of Malletts Bay. In the coming weeks we will also be meeting with staff representatives of Senator Leahy's office and US Representative Welch's office. Likewise the Selectboard and the Prudential Committee of Fire District

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#2 will be meeting to discuss options for the development of Malletts Bay. These are important “little steps” which precede visible changes that evolve from citizens need to assure sustainability of their community.

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