

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of February 8, 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

We've had another good week at Burnham Library. Tutoring with students from the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences is continuing to go well. We were recently able to add more tutors, so there are more days and times available. Tutoring is focused on grades 1-6 – call 878-0313 to sign up. Last week we had our first tax preparation session with the AARP Volunteer Tax Aide Service; appointments are filling up, so give us a call if you'd like to make one. This week, our Young Adult Advisory Board and Write Now! (teen writing group) met on Monday, and we had our DCF book discussion for 8-11 year olds on Wednesday. Next Saturday (Feb. 16) is our Winter Book Sale, which will run from 9 am-3 pm at the library. We'll have hardcovers and paperbacks, fiction and non-fiction, and books for adults and kids, as well as movies and music. The Friends of the Library are looking for moving help on Wednesday (Feb 13), prep help on Friday (Feb 15), and cleanup help on Saturday (Feb 16); if you're able to help, give us a call at 879-7576. Later in the month, we've got our two-part SAT Practice Exam, with an instructor from Princeton Review. Part I is the test itself, which takes place on Feb 23, from 9 am-1 pm; Part II is the scores and strategies session, and is on Mar. 2 from 10-11: 30 pm. Please register using the link on our website, and call with any questions.

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

We are spending some time finding a new look for our town website (colchestervt.gov). The website is an important place for local citizens and other visitors to find out what is going on in our town government, where events are happening, forms that can be downloaded, contact information for departments and general information. It takes time to convert a website as large as the town's but we hope to have a new design soon.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

Federal law enforcement grants have diminished somewhat in past years but nevertheless have proved valuable to our department. This week we completed a drawdown of a 2009 Byrne Grant that brought approximately \$130,000 to Colchester for much needed equipment. Included were new patrol rifles, outdoor scene lighting systems and shelters, as well as a cruiser locator system. This system allows our

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communications staff to monitor the exact location of our fleet vehicles. This is an extremely important officer safety issue should radio communication be lost and also affords the dispatchers the ability to see which of the patrols is closest to an emergency call. This same grant had previously also been used to install access management and video surveillance systems in the new police facilities.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Nothing to report.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

After a successful 30th Annual Winter Carnival we are shifting our focus to our summer program offerings. This week and next we will be putting the finishing touches on the summer camps and programs and sending the information to the printer. The brochures should be in every resident's mailbox by the second week of March. With the impending snows coming, it is a great opportunity to register for our Snowshoe Dinner event which takes place on Friday, Feb 22 at Airport Park. You can snowshoe or ski to different locations around the park and enjoy lots of different snacks and meals.

Friday, Feb 15th we will be hosting the 5-6 grade girls basketball tournament for recreation departments. The recreational basketball program has two more weeks remaining and then our focus is Lacrosse. If you have not registered your child please do so by the deadline of March 15th.

In the parks we have focused on the ice rink maintenance. With snows coming we will get out and groom XC trails as soon as possible. Preparations have been made for the stations for the Snowshoe Dinner. Work has also taken place on planning summer projects such as fence replacements at Bayside and Airport Parks, irrigation upgrades at Airport and other projects.

Be sure to get out and recreate!

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

Exit 16 Sidewalks – A request for qualifications for inspection services and the construction contract have been advertised.

River Road Sidewalks – Ground survey has been completed. Work is proceeding on the identification of right-of-way limits and preliminary design.

Water Storage Tank - Developing revised 2012 water usage data. Geotechnical investigation and majority of survey work has been completed. Beginning to approach permitting stage of project.

Fort Ethan Allen Sidewalks - Draft design scope submitted to VTrans for comments.

West Lakeshore Drive Multi-Use Path - Draft Request for Qualifications for design engineer services completed.

Completed design review associated with the redesign of the Meadow Drive ditch reconstruction project intended to address concerns raised by state and federal environmental regulators.

Staff attendance at a 6 hour Workplace Safety & OSHA Compliance seminar.

Misc. maintenance tasks were completed through operations including tree removal, snow removal, resetting of roadway signs knocked down by vehicles, pot hole filling on both gravel and paved roadways.

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Received three quotes for the removal of the damaged lobby ceiling at the Meeting House on Main Street. The work will result in some disruption for building users. The main entrance and lobby will be unavailable because of staging areas that need to be built for the safe removal of the current ceiling (which contains traces of asbestos). Signs will be posted directing users to the side entrance.

Attended state briefing on the implementation of the revised federal storm water permitting process which Colchester is subject to.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be on March 5th and will include a presentation on the Integrated Water Resources Management Plan. The Commission has been discussing the Heineberg / Prim Road zoning and will hold informal public meetings on possible changes to the zoning in this area on March 19th and April 2nd. The Department is continuing toward implementing new permit software this spring which will require changing operating procedure and evaluating current processes for efficiencies.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

Hooray! We have finally received the Vermont tax books in the office. Please remember that the State has changed the homestead filing requirements again. For the past couple of years it was not necessary to file a homestead form if you had not moved to a new location. THAT HAS CHANGED! You **must** file the HS-122, which is the declaration and property tax adjustment form and HI-144 which is the household income form for those applying for the property tax adjustment. If you fail to file these forms by April 15th your property tax bill will be at the higher non-residential rate.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

The preparations for the 2013 Grand List is ongoing. We are now inspecting all properties that have had physical changes. These inspections will continue until all neighborhoods in town have been reviewed. As well as site inspection and assessing all new construction, we conduct ratio studies to ensure all properties are assessed at the same market level. By assessing all properties to the same market level we will have a fair and equitable property tax.

From February 26 to March 5 I will be out of the office welcoming a new member to my family. Donna O'Connor the Assistant Assessor will be available to assist with any assessment questions.

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

This week the emphasis is on the services the Town of Colchester offers in the Public Safety category. This category includes the Police Department, Rescue, Technical Rescue and the Town's stipend to the volunteer fire departments.

Public Safety makes up over 45% of the FY 14 budget for a total of about \$5.1 million.

Some of the services offered by this segment of the budget are as follows:

- * 24/7 police protection

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- * Protection of life and property through education and enforcement of criminal and motor vehicle laws
- * Motor vehicle crash investigations
- * Police assistance to public for crisis mediation, quality of life issues
- * Communication services for police, fire and rescue
- * Proactive safety initiatives including DARE training, school resource officer, child restraint technicians & self-defense classes
- * 911 Emergency ambulance services
- * Outreach events - Annual Family Fun & Safety Night
- * CPR Courses (American Heart Assoc), CPR in Schools
- * First Aid for Scout Troops
- * Technical Rescue - search & rescue (including water rescues and confined space rescue)

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

We are now a month away from Town Meeting Day – a time when voters need to approve or not approve two different and distinctly separate budgets. One budget will represent the needs and expenses of the Colchester School District to educate the Town's children. The other budget will represent the needs and expenses of the municipal government of the Town of Colchester. As Town Manager I will only speak about the municipal budget.

Approximately 75% of the municipal government expenses are labor or employee expenses. This year the Town negotiated a two year contract with both the Colchester Police Officers Association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1343. Through those discussions both associations/unions along with the non-unionized employees made possible major savings in pension and health insurance benefit costs. These savings will have long term benefits for the Town and taxpayers.

The remaining 25% of the budget is for the commodities we purchase and the contracts for services the Town needs. It is in this section of the expenses that the Town departments employ "zero based" budgeting by seeking quotes for supplies we need the next year. Some supplies like natural gas to heat the buildings are not "biddable" in that gas rates are set by the Public Service Board. However, products like salt and sand are either purchased through a State contract or by bid. Paper and other products are similarly searched for the cheapest vendor. Most of these items increased in cost.

Before bringing this budget to the Town Selectboard we had a citizens advisory committee examine the proposed budget. The Town began working with this group of citizens as department directors were beginning their efforts to prepare budgets for the coming Fiscal Year. They reviewed past budgets, were explained the respective tasks and responsibilities of the departments before examining the proposed departmental budgets. At the end of this process the Finance Advisory Committee concluded "the proposed FY '14 budget addressed the Town's "fiscal cliff" successfully and deserves the Town's support. It is a fiscally responsible budget."

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