

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of October 19, 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

Things have been steady here at the library. We've had a couple more visits by First Grade classes from Union Memorial School, which always brings a delightful energy to the building. The number of patrons asking about downloadable ebooks and audio books has only increased over time - through ListenUpVermont, we have both available, no matter your device. For more information, stop by the library, or check out the Downloadable EBooks & Audiobooks link on the front page of our site. Finally, we're getting prepared for the Halloween Party on Oct. 29th - take a look downstairs in the Children's Department to see the decorations, or borrow a few books to get you in the spirit.

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

This week has been busy with helpdesk calls covering software and hardware. Laptops are again being prepared and tested for the Clerk's office to use for the November 6 Presidential Election at the polling locations. The laptops are necessary to keep in contact with the Vermont Secretary of State's voter database in case there are any voter registration inquiries.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

The police department has been very busy this last week with a number of arrests. Some of the highlights included the arrest of two separate individuals entering and stealing from unlocked vehicles. In one case the offender actually stole one of the vehicles entered. Most of the stolen property, including the vehicle, was recovered. An individual was arrested following reports of three burglaries in the village area. Another arrest occurred when officers found a convicted felon in possession of four firearms in the Route 15 area. The case was handed over to Federal authorities because this offence falls within their jurisdiction. Also this week the department, working with the US Marshall's service arrested a wanted fugitive who we had developed information leading us to believe he was staying in a motel in the Exit 16 area. A number of other events occurred this last week however these were some of the highlights.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

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

Colchester Rescue responded to 20 EMS calls this week, and transported 15 people to the hospital. 2 calls were turned over while we were already on a call.

Colchester Technical Rescue was requested to respond to Hunger Mountain, to assist with an injured hiker, but they were cancelled before responding.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The 1st Annual “Junk in the Trunk” event at Bayside Park was a great success. We had 14 people register to sell items. Even though we saw our first significantly cold morning people arrived and enjoyed the event. Many visitors purchased items and was decided that next year we will hold the event before October and have it last longer in the day. We would like to thank all that attended and looking forward to the event growing next year. Work continues in getting programs for the Winter/Spring Program brochure. If you have a hobby or skill that you would like to share with others and would like to organize a program please contact us at 264-5640.

Seasonal cleaning of the parks continues. This past week we repaired the Causeway Connector Path that leaves Airport Park. There is a hill there that washes out and is a bit tricky to travel on a bike. Our Parks Staff put down a recycled asphalt material in which we hope will make the surface more user friendly.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

Met with VTrans to discuss the Town’s grant application for the construction of a park and ride facility on Heineberg Drive.

Completed the reconstruction of the East Lakeshore Drive storm water outfall damaged by ice flows last spring.

Construction is underway on the repair of a storm water outfall on Malletts Bay Avenue damaged as part of the flooding in 2011. Expect delays on this corridor with one-way traffic at the site.

Significant progress has been made on the East Road Depot Road intersection project. Absent any unforeseen issues, the roadway is expected to be re-opened on or before the contract completion date of 11/9/12.

A request for engineering services for the design of sidewalks along River Road has been completed and expected to be issued in the near future.

Preparations are being made to begin the design of a new water storage tank on Water Tower Hill. Additional fire storage is needed for the continued build out of the severance Corners Growth Center.

Completed and submitted the wetlands permit application for the Meadow Drive Ditch Project to state and federal regulators.

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

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The Planning and Zoning Department would like to remind the community that the “winter shut down” for earth disturbance is in effect. New permits along the lake or disturbing more than 10,000 sq. ft. of earth must include a winter erosion control plan and request for waiver of the shut down. Existing sites must either stabilize or have an approved erosion control plan. Winter is coming and a much needed fall chore is to check your septic tank. Most of Colchester has on-site systems that need to be pumped every few years. A good way to tell is to open your tank and see what the level is. Each fall and spring the effluent filter in the septic tank should be removed, checked, and sprayed down to allow flow from the tank to the leach field. Don’t know where your septic system is? Contact our dept. and we can usually pull the plans to help you locate it. Like many things, a little preventative work can pay off and prevent a more expensive fix later.

Clerk’s Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

Did you know that early voting is becoming more popular with each election? Four years ago 8090 ballots were cast in the presidential election with 3200 of the ballots being cast early, either by walking in the office to vote or calling to request that a ballot be mailed.

So far this year, we have issued 1136 early ballots. Of those, 680 have been mailed, 283 voted in the office, 134 picked up their ballot to take home, and 25 were emailed to the military or citizens living outside of the country. We will continue to follow these trends so that we can expend our resources in an efficient and responsible manner. Elections spanned over four weeks are more expensive than in the past, when everyone voted on Election Day. There are costs associated with convenience!

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

The Assessor’s Office is reorganizing the filing system for property records. This includes updating the Record Retentions Guidelines to conform to State recommendation, so that outdated files, correspondence, and redundant information is not taking up space. We will also be utilizing an electronic fillings system to have associated documents linked to the Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software. This will allow us to review a property’s data and any information that might help in determining the property’s value all in one place. These changes will create efficiencies by consolidating data and have a better use of the limited space.

There are 4 appeals to the State Appraiser scheduled in the month of November.

The Board of Civil Authority decisions have been issued. Any changes as a result of the Board’s decisions have been entered into the appraisal software and new tax bills will be mailed by the Town Clerks Office in the coming weeks.

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

What makes up the municipal tax rate?

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

The municipal tax rate is made up of a number of factors with the General Fund Operating Budget being the largest portion of the tax rate. The operating budget for FY 13 is \$11,085,390, but to arrive at the amount of this that results in taxes we must first subtract operating revenues, reduction in fund balance and transfers from other funds. The operating revenues are primarily fees that are charged for various services the Town offers. After subtracting these items the amount of the operating budget for FY 13 that we had to raise taxes for is \$8,974,283. This is a reduction of \$2,111,107 or 23%.

In addition to the operating budget we raise taxes for items previously approved by the voters. These include debt service, the Capital Transportation Plan, the Capital Equipment Plan, the Park Capital Plan and reserves for technology, communications and bridges.

I have summarized below these items and the dollars and tax rate associated with them:

| Municipal Budget | Expenditures | Municipal Tax Rate |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Town Operating Budget | \$11,085,390 | |
| Less: Reduction in Fund Balance | (\$ 135,000) | |
| Less: Transfer from Other Funds | (\$ 235,521) | |
| Less: Other Revenues | (\$ 1,740,586) | |
| Net Operating Budget | \$ 8,974,283 | \$0.4591 |
| Debt Service | \$ 670,339 | \$0.0343 |
| Capital Transportation Plan | \$ 635,351 | \$0.0325 |
| Capital Equipment Plan | \$ 371,436 | \$0.0190 |
| Park Capital Plan | \$ 97,746 | \$0.0050 |
| Technology Reserve | \$ 25,000 | \$0.0013 |
| Communications Reserve | \$ 20,000 | \$0.0010 |
| Bridges | \$ 16,500 | \$0.0008 |
| Net Municipality tax liability | \$10,810,655 | \$0.5530 |

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

Two weeks ago I announced my retirement then left for a two week vacation and now I am back full of vim and vigor. I do want to thank and express my appreciation to all the people who have contacted me regarding my planned departure. I do plan to be around and in charge for several more months.

Hopefully, I will have an opportunity to take my successor around Town in order to provide a successful and easy transition for the Town in this changeover of managers.

I have little news to report except it rained most of my vacation so my wife got a glimpse of her future. She enjoyed it.

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