

For the Week of December 4, 2017

Manager's Message of the Week Dawn Francis, Town Manager

Proposed Charter Change for March 2018 Ballot

In 2014, per a recommendation by the Governance Committee, a proposed amendment to the Colchester Charter was approved by the Selectboard for the November ballot. The proposed change would have made the Town Clerk/Treasurer an appointed (i.e. hired) position rather than an elected one. It was put to the voters and voted down by a 13 vote margin.

Upon the second review of the Charter by the Governance Committee, their recommendation for the change stood and at the November 28th Selectboard meeting the board again approved initiation of the process for placing the charter change question on the March 2018 ballot.

The amendment is endorsed by Colchester's longtime Town Clerk/Treasurer, Karen Richard, who has been in the position since 1998. In a memo to the Selectboard Ms. Richard stated:

"Today's Town Clerk and Treasurer Office is not the same as 30 years ago. The Town Clerk is the custodian of all public records, including land records, election records, vital records, etc. The Town Treasurer is a key player in maintaining the Town's financial records and invests Town monies, bills and collects Town and Education taxes, makes deposits, etc. The banking is online; the tax payments are received from escrow companies electronically. The land records are scanned and the images can be researched online. Voters register on the State Election system, and through the automatic registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles; election results are entered electronically to the Secretary of State website. Today's Town Clerk/Treasurer must keep up with rapidly changing technologies as well as the multitude of statutory changes."

Ms. Richard also noted a number of serious drawbacks to electing the Town Clerk/Treasurer including:

- Lack of oversight / accountability
- No guarantee of candidates' qualification for the position
- No requirement for certification
- No requirement for training or continued education as technology evolves
- A clerk suspected of fraud can remain in the position
- Internal controls cannot be mandated by the Town Manager or auditors

All other Department Heads in the Town are hired on the merits of their qualifications and all are accountable to the Town Manager for their performance. The status of the Town Clerk/Treasurer is equal to that of the other Department Heads. The office's responsibilities are enormous and require a wide variety of skill sets: knowledge of technology, finances, taxes, state statutes, legal procedures, and more. It is not difficult to imagine the chaos that could ensue if a new Clerk/Treasurer was unprepared for the challenge.

Colchester residents have been extremely fortunate that Ms. Richard has taken the initiative over the years to keep abreast of trends and training for her office. We have her to thank for Colchester's searchable online public records and that the Town is keeping up with ever-increasing demands to conduct business online.

We hope you will consider this information and a charter change that will ensure that the position of Town Clerk/Treasurer will be filled in future by a person who comes with the skills and experience necessary for the continued smooth, efficient operation of the Clerk's Office and the Town of Colchester.

For more about the Town Manager visit <http://colchestervt.gov/manager> or call (802) 264-5509.

Burnham Memorial Library
Kelly McCagg, Director

Greetings from Burnham Library. We hope that everyone had an enjoyable Thanksgiving. As we start the long march into winter, keep in mind that the library has a wide range of resources for those cold days, from books and DVDs to audiobooks and music. For the Christmas holiday, we will be closing at 2 pm on Friday, Dec. 22, and will be closed through Monday, Dec. 25. We will also be closed on Monday, Jan. 1, for New Year's Day. Here are some of our upcoming programs:

- Gingerbread/Graham Cracker House Contest – Build a tasty structure, and bring it to the library for our annual contest! Patrons will vote on their favorites. We will accept entries as of December 1st and voting starts December 8, but entries will be accepted after voting begins. We'll display your creation and every entrant will be eligible for a raffled basket of goodies. Gingerbread kits and family/team entries are welcome. Guidelines and entry forms are available at our website.
- **Cider & Cookie Week:** December 4 - 8. Stop in for homemade cookies and spiced cider, compliments of library staff.

- **Holiday Storytime:** Mondays, December 4, 11, and 18 at 10:30 am. A selection of holiday stories, traditional and new, plus music, rhymes, and a snack! For kids of all ages.
- **Needle Felting Holiday Ornaments:** Tuesday, December 5, 2-3:30 PM, and Monday, December 11, 6:30-7:45 PM. Learn how to needle felt holiday ornaments. All materials provided. Sign up at our website.
- **Teen Craft Time: String Art!:** Thursday, December 7, 4 PM. Starting to wonder what might make a good holiday gift? Need to spiff up your space as the weather gets colder? How about some nifty wall art made of nothing but string and nails? That's right – we're doing string art! Teens grades 6-12. Sign up at our website.
- **Cooking the Books:** Thursday, December 14, 1 PM. Each season we will pick a different cookbook or novel that features several recipes. Participants will sign up to make a recipe and bring it the day of the meeting. Staff will make copies of the recipes. This season, we'll be cooking from "The Perfect Cookie."

For more about Burnham Library events visit <http://colchestervt.gov/library> or call (802) 264-5660.

Parks and Recreation Department
Glen Cuttitta, Director

RECREATION PROGRAMS

- The 2018 Winter/Spring Guide has been released and registration for Colchester residents began December 1. Be sure to check out the upcoming events and programs for all ages! There are many NEW programs too – you won't want to miss them! Registration for the 2018 Youth Lacrosse League has also opened; details can be found on p. 17 of the Winter/Spring Guide.
- The Colchester Youth Basketball League is in full swing! Teams in Grades 1 – 8 are practicing all week long to prepare for games that will start in January.
- The Youth Basketball League is seeking officials to referee games. If you have knowledge of basketball and are willing to help our youth athletes learn the game, reach out to Isaac Spivey at ispivey@colchestervt.gov or 802-264-5646; compensation available depending on experience.

EVENTS

- Auditions for **Colchester's Got Talent** will be on January 18, 2018, 2 – 8 PM at the Colchester High School Performing Arts Center. Mark your calendars and start practicing your talent today!
- The **Colchester Winter Carnival** is February 2, 3, & 4, 2018 at the Colchester High School. This year's theme is "Wacky World of Science." More details will be posted on <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation> once they are available.

- Mark your calendars for a NEW winter event: the **Balaclava Blitz! Winter Sprint Triathlon!** The event is Sunday, February 18 at Bayside Park beginning at 9:00 AM. It features a 3K running, 5.6K Mountain Bike, and 5K Nordic ski course. Racers must be 16 year of age or older; all participants will receive finish time and refreshments. Registration opened December 1, 2017 online and at the Rec Office.

PARKS

- All park bathrooms are **closed** for the season.
- **Ice Rink at Airport Park** will open when the weather cooperates: frozen ground, at least one week of no precipitation, and temperatures in the teens. Typically this occurs after December, but we are ready if conditions are favorable sooner. Check the department website for updates!
- **Nordic Trail Grooming at Airport Park** will start when we get snow and consistent cold temperatures. Think snow!

PROJECTS

- **Bayside Park Master Plan:** Planning continues on the Bayside/Hazelett and Bayside Park properties. The consultant, Design Concepts, is creating a phasing plan and cost estimates. Final presentation is scheduled for mid-March.
- **Village Park Trail Project:** Trail construction began mid-October. Currently the contractor is applying the base stone. Next will be top soil shoulders, then the final layer of surface material. The project should continue on schedule barring any significant weather events.

For more about Parks & Rec visit <http://colchestervt.gov/recreation> or call (802) 264-5640.

Upcoming Town Meetings:

- **Selectboard:** Tuesday, December 5, 6:00-7:30 PM. Special Budget Meeting/Work Session. This is a work session only and no actions will be taken. Champlain Room, 2nd floor.
- **Planning Commission:** Tuesday, December 5, 7:00 PM
- **Selectboard:** Tuesday, December 12, 6:30 PM
- **Recreation Advisory Board:** Wednesday, December 13, 7:00 AM, Champlain Room, 2nd floor
- **Development Review Board:** Wednesday, December 13, 7:00 PM
- **Conservation Commission:** The December meeting has been **cancelled**.

All meetings take place at the Colchester Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, in the Outer Bay Conference Room on the 3rd floor unless otherwise noted.

Selectboard: Highlights of Meeting of November 28, 2017

- Jim Neary was appointed to the Recreation Advisory Board and Mark Tarinelli was appointed to the Planning Commission.
- The draft FY2019 Capital Budget Program was approved as presented and a public hearing was warned for January 9, 2017.
- Amendments to the Colchester Code of Ordinances, “Chapter 6-1/2. Fees for Permits and Licenses” was approved for First Reading and a public hearing will be held on January 23, 2018.
- The Selectboard approved initiation of the adoption process to place a Charter amendment on the March ballot to make the office of Town Clerk/Treasurer an appointed (hired) position, rather than elected. Two public hearings will be held on January 9 and January 23. An information meeting will be held at Town Meeting on March 5, 2018 before voting on the issue on March 6, 2018.
- The Selectboard **cancelled** the meeting on December 26, 2017.

Events:

- **Colchester’s Got Talent Auditions:** January 18, 2 – 8 PM, Colchester High School Performing Arts Center.
- **Colchester Winter Carnival:** February 2, 3, & 4, 2018 at Colchester High School: “Wacky World of Science.”
- **NEW! Balaclava Blitz: Winter Sprint Triathlon!** Sunday, February 18, 9:00 AM at Bayside Park. 3K run, 5.6K Mountain Bike, and 5K Nordic ski course. Racers must be 16 or older.

For more on these events visit our website (Parks and Recreation) or call 264-5640.

Notices:

- The Town Offices will **close at noon** on Friday, December 22 and be **closed** on Monday, December 25, in observance of Christmas.
- The Town Offices will **close at noon** on Friday, December 29 be **closed** on Monday, January 1, 2018 in observance of New Year’s Day.



Remember to follow us on Facebook (@TownColchesterVT) to get the latest about what’s happening in your community!



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