

For the Week of April 4, 2022

Manager's Message

Aaron Frank, Town Manager

Green Up Day is Saturday, May 7th, 2022. Consider participating in the annual event to help clean up the community! Look for more information on where to pick up Green Up trash bags and drop off zones in upcoming Newsletters.



Town News Interviews

Fire Calls Are Just One Part of It

*An interview with Steve Bourgeois, Colchester Fire Chief
by Alicia Tebeau-Sherry, Town Manager's
Office, Communications Coordinator*

Chief Bourgeois shared with me all the types of calls the department responds to, his hopes for an open house this spring, and details on how to become a volunteer Firefighter for the Department.

ATS: Can you tell me about what the Colchester Fire Department does for the Town?

SB: We provide fire protection, emergency medical service (EMS) first response, marine firefighting, as we have a fire



boat, public education, hazardous materials first response, ice/cold water rescue, heavy rescue, and fire prevention. We also provide mutual aid to the surrounding communities. To provide some context, last year we responded to 1,074 calls for service.



When our crews are out in the public and not on a call, they are often doing preplans of commercial buildings, which are records that give us information on crucial building information needed in the case of an emergency. Most of the commercial buildings in town have one, but we are still working on making sure they all do.

ATS: What might the Town not know about the Colchester Fire Department and what it offers?

SB: We are a combination department, and some people may think we're a full-time department, but we're not, as the majority of our staff is actually volunteer and we couldn't do it without them. The residents may not realize the amount of time that is put in from the volunteers and paid members as far as training goes. Our full-time members are at least Firefighter Level 1 State-Certified and State-Certified

Emergency Medical Technicians, which require annual re-certification and continued education. Our volunteers are encouraged to obtain this certification and are required to complete 66 hours of training a year. Last year our department completed over 2,000 hours of training. We respond to medical assist calls with Colchester Rescue, hazardous material calls, wires down, odor investigations, elevator emergencies, and we'll get calls for water in the basement and for other things that aren't actually fire-related—fire calls are actually just one small aspect of it.

ATS: What does a typical day at the Colchester Fire Department look like?

SB: During the week Tuesday through Thursday, there are 3 full-time members on one truck, and they run out of the Center Station on Main Street. Then, on Mondays and Fridays, they run out of the Malletts Bay Station. Their days start at 8 AM and they respond to any emergency call during the day, complete and update preplans, check commercial key boxes, conduct training, and maintain the stations and equipment. For any calls



that come in after 4 PM on weekdays and on weekends, our volunteers respond, unless it's a working incident or actual fire and we would then call back the full-time members as well.

With over 1,000 calls a year, or an average of 3 to 4 calls a day, we always have something to do. Calls can require any amount of time, from 1 hour to as many as 6 hours, depending on what type of call it is and how long it takes to put all the equipment back in service for the next call and complete the required paperwork.

ATS: You spoke of the training firefighters have to complete. What do these trainings look like?

SB: Normally, we train one night a week, on Monday nights, in-person, and we cover a different subject every week. For example, in the summertime, we're training on subjects like pumping water, hose evolutions, wildfire firefighting, or operation of the fire boat. The first Monday of the month is actually a work night, so members clean and check the trucks, equipment and stations, and we have a meeting to get everyone updated. All firefighters, career or volunteer, who are Level 1 and Level 2 State-Certified are required to complete 24 hours of continued training a year, so we complete trainings on subjects like hazardous materials, CPR, emergency medical technician (EMT), Standard Operating Guidelines, Table Top Exercises, and Fire Scenarios. During COVID, we had to change everything to virtual training, and it did make it very difficult, but we are pleased to be back to in-person training! We also do some training with Rescue and the Police Department



ATS: Has the Fire Department been working on anything special that the community can look forward to hearing about?

SB: Well, we merged back on July 1st, 2020—it was previously two departments and both departments worked differently with different equipment and training—and since then, we've been trying to standardize everything from our gear and equipment to our training. In the spring, we'd love to have an open house at both stations, invite the residents, have some public education at the same time, and try to recruit volunteers. We want to get the public in our stations so they can see our new equipment, gear and tell them about what we do!

ATS: Have you been able to do public education despite COVID? And how is your staffing?

SB: Our public education has definitely slowed down since COVID, but we hope to get back in schools soon. We have a cadette program for youth and currently have 6 cadettes on the roster. As a combined department, we have 4 full-time people, myself as the Chief, a Captain, and 2 full-time firefighters. We staff these hours with our full-time employees because, when we merged, we looked back at the past 5 years at when the busiest times for calls were and found that they were during weekdays, which is also when our volunteer staff are really limited due to other jobs and daytimes commitments. We currently have 47 volunteers, with 6 of those being cadettes. We also have a contract with St. Michael's Fire and they are one of our Battalions, so they provide fire protection with us and help us cover all of Colchester. In return, we provide training, gear on the trucks and protective equipment for their members.

ATS: What are you proud of that your department has completed, especially through the COVID-19 pandemic?

SB: The thing I'm most proud of is how the members reacted through COVID. They continued to respond to calls, train (virtually, but it was still training that was required). I'm so proud of the way they continued to do what they do despite and through COVID because it could have been easy for them to say, "No, I can't do this," but they didn't—they stepped up and I'm proud of how the department has come together as one in the last two years.



ATS: Much of your staff is volunteer-based. If someone was interested, how would they go about becoming a volunteer?

SB: Potential volunteers can call me at 802-862-4415 x 11 which rings at both stations, my cell at 802-316-0424, email me at sbourgeois@colchestervt.gov, or visit our

web page at <https://colchestervt.gov/3245/Fire-Department> to find out more information. We can arrange visits to the station or visits to training nights. We also have volunteer applications here: <https://colchestervt.gov/forms.aspx?FID=71>.

When someone completes this, we'll get back to them regarding the process of interviews and background checks. Then they'll come on board for three weeks to see if it is something they are interested in, and if they are still interested after the three weeks, we issue them a full set of protective gear and start the training process. People are also welcome to stop by the stations during the day or a training night and talk to someone about the department.

ATS: How can the community keep up with your department?

SB: We are active in the Town Newsletter and website , and we have our own Facebook page. We update our Facebook page regularly, but people can feel free to call any of the stations any time if they have any questions or if they want a tour.

Reminder

Roadside Signs: Please do not place signs advertising ongoing businesses or services beside the road on public OR private property that is not yours. Off-site advertising is generally not legal in Vermont and these signs are prohibited by State law. The Town or the State own access to and use of 'right of way' land alongside roads, paths and sidewalks. In the past, the Town would remove these signs, call the numbers on them and allow the businesses to collect them. We have found that they are picked up and then put back. We do not budget your taxpayer funding to repeatedly collect, call and return theses signs. As a result, we will simply remove them, and dispose of them without the courtesy call or the opportunity to collect them.



Upcoming Town Meetings

Selectboard: Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 6:30 pm at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. Residents are welcome to attend the meeting or alternatively send a note, up to 1,000 words, to TownManager@colchestervt.gov with "Citizens to be Heard" in the Subject and their name and address in the body of the email. The email will be shared with the entire Selectboard prior to the meeting and included in the information packet at the next meeting (as the information packet for the current meeting is sent out along with the agenda).

- Watch the Meeting Online via Live Stream: <http://lcatv.org/live-stream-2>
- Agenda: www.bit.ly/Colchester-SB-Agendas

Planning Commission:



It's Your Bay

April 5th
7 pm
April 8th
8-10 am

The Colchester Planning Commission wants to hear from you as it considers updates to regulations along East Lakeshore Drive

Attend in person at the Colchester Town Offices:

April 5th, 7:00 PM, Planning Commission Meeting

April 8th, drop in anytime between 8-10 am for coffee with Planning staff to ask questions, learn more, or provide comments

Submit your thoughts anytime to Cathyann LaRose, Director of Planning and Zoning. clarose@colchestervt.gov or 802-264-5606

Recreation Advisory Board: Wednesday, April 13, 7:00 am at the Town Offices.

Development Review Board: Wednesday, April 13, 7:00 pm at the Colchester Town Offices, 3rd Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road. The Development Review Board will likely be participating remotely. Members of the public will have the option to choose either remote or in-person attendance. Masks are required for in-person attendance. Public comments can be submitted prior to the hearing by email to zmaia@colchestervt.gov or by mail to Town of Colchester, c/o Development Review Board, 781 Blakely Road, Colchester, VT 05446. Alternatively, participate in the public comment periods during the hybrid meeting.

- Participate by Phone: 1-929-205-6099
- Meeting ID: 871 3561 5437 (US – New York)
- Link to meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87135615437>
- Watch Meeting Online via Live Stream: <http://lcatv.org/live-stream-2>
- Agenda: https://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt?docId=DRBAgenda&path=DRB%2CDRB_Agendas%2CDRBAgenda%2C

Subscribe to the Town Newsletter: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/jkMAO2v>

For more information or to comment, call 802-264-5509 or email townmanager@colchestervt.gov