

## **For the Week of June 13, 2022**

### **Manager's Message**

Aaron Frank, Town Manager

On Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, Colchester Rescue and Technical Rescue celebrated Rescue's 60<sup>th</sup> year of operation and Technical Rescue's 33<sup>rd</sup> year of specialized service to the Town at an annual appreciation banquet.

Colchester Rescue highlighted their many accomplishments from Fall of 2020 to 2021. Members Julia Correll, Shannon Spaulding, Joe Orsolits, Jacenda O'Dwyer, Hannah Clay, and Jasmine Magloire were recognized for becoming full members, and Tucker Avonda, Joe Orsolits, Bradley Labombard, Cait Hunt, and Hannah Gould celebrated the completion of their driver training. Julia Correll was acknowledged for the completion of her Emergency Medical Technician training and Hannah Gould and Lauren Pelletier for their completion of Advanced Emergency Medical Technician training.



Kat Shaw, Libby Connors, Merrill Pine, Dave Cohen, and Natalie Guyette were honored with pins for their 5 years of service, Becky Alemy for her 15 years of service, and Mike Akerlind for his 20 years of service. Becky Alemy was made a life member as well. Additionally, Tucker Avonda was awarded with the Most Shifts Run at 918.5 hours or 76.5 shifts, Cait Hunt with Rookie of the Year, and AJ Daubenschmidt with Member of the Year.



Technical Rescue member Dave Potter was honored with the Member of the Year award for his positive attitude, professional demeanor, instrumental advancement of the crew's technical diving training and equipment, and his hundreds of hours of community service to the team. Another Technical Rescue member, Chip Perry, was awarded the Class A Life Saving Award for the saving of human life under the most adverse conditions and extreme personal risk in an almost two-hour-long water rescue during a flash flooding incident in March of 2021.

Congratulations and thank you to all of these amazing volunteers!

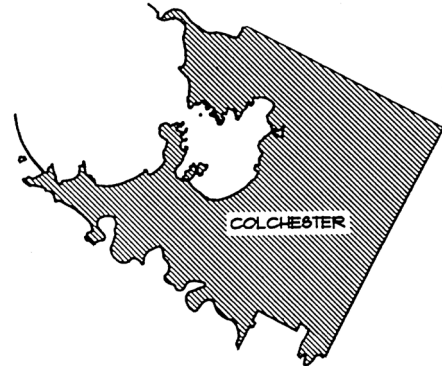
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## Town News Interviews

Community Engagement is Critical for P&Z!

*An interview with Cathyann LaRose, Director of Colchester's Planning and Zoning Department  
by Alicia Tebeau-Sherry*

*I met with Colchester Planning and Zoning Director, Cathyann LaRose to learn about what tasks and services make up Planning versus Zoning and why the community's involvement is so crucial to the development of the Department's projects.*



**ATS: To familiarize others about you and the Department of Planning and Zoning, can you tell me about what your department does for the Town of Colchester and what's the difference between its two parts?**

CL: On a daily basis, the Planning and Zoning Department answers questions related to land development, processes building and zoning permits—specifically applications for permits for things like building a shed, adding a deck, building an entire house, or installing seawalls, something we see more often because we are a lake community—and issues a significant number



of compliance letters requested for real estate closings. We are also regularly working to review larger development projects that go before the volunteer Development Review Board (DRB) and leading long-range planning work and updates to regulations undertaken by the volunteer Planning Commission. Zoning can be understood as the reactionary aspect of the office, so that includes the permitting part, while Planning more so refers to the proactive side when we are thinking ahead and receiving input for projects.

**ATS: What might the Colchester community not know about the department and what it offers?**

CL: Colchester's Planning and Zoning office takes great pride in being a county leader in property file access. Many people don't know that they can go online to review not only their tax cards, but also their property's permit history. In most cases, you can permit a project from application to approval, all online. We also offer information and services to homes located within the Flood Hazard Area, or floodplain.

**ATS: What does a typical day in the Department of Planning and Zoning look like?**



CL: Kirk Dressing-Kirkorian and Jon Fletcher are our Associate Planners. They are likely the voices you'll hear when you call and the faces you'll see when you stop by. They process most of the daily applications. Zach Maia is the Town's Development Planner and works on larger projects that are reviewed by the DRB. He sometimes helps out with permits, but is typically at work on these larger development applications. I typically



spend my days making sure the planning work we do fits into the overall goals of the Town: everything from responding to community requests to preparing for Planning Commission projects and working with the Town administration and Selectboard. Sometimes though, a typical day in the office is not in the office at all. Our office routinely conducts site visits and occupancy inspections. We love to get out, meet people and see progress in-person.

**ATS: What types of projects has your department been working on? What can the community look forward to from the completion of these projects?**

CL: We have a variety of projects we're hoping to work on throughout the year. Typical weekly projects include everyday permits for things like fences, sheds, swimming pools and interior renovations. The DRB is currently reviewing a significant mixed-use project in the northeast quadrant of our Growth Center. The Planning Commission has started public outreach and input



for potential rezoning along East Lakeshore Drive. We held a first meeting in April and are hosting a second meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup> to share the synthesized feedback and present a first draft of ideas. A summer intern from UVM's internship program has started with our office and is taking on some smaller projects we've been planning and have really wanted to complete, but haven't had the time for.

**ATS: How do the employees of your department work together to complete projects and services?**

CL: Though we are a small department with a diverse array of tasks, all of this work must be cohesive in order to meet the goals of the Town Plan. Long-range planning and bylaw updates ultimately create the regulations enforced by the DRB and the permitting staff. We also collaborate with other departments, especially when looking for input on the planning side of some projects or updating these bylaws, whether that's working with the Public Works Department regarding considerations of roadway widths or

Parks and Recreation to find out what types of recreation activities people are looking for and the spaces needed for those.

**ATS: How does your department keep the Colchester community in mind when planning projects and services? How do you engage with the community to communicate about these projects?**

CL: Outreach and engagement are critical components of everything we do. We use our resources in the best way possible to reach as many stakeholders as we can, with bigger projects utilizing enhanced newspaper advertisements and direct mailings. It's been hard to navigate community involvement during COVID times, but whether over Zoom or in-person through events like workshops or walking tours, we are always trying to recruit and keep the community involved with the projects we are working on. We also encourage citizens to connect with the office and the volunteer members appointed to represent them.



**ATS: What are you proud of that the Department of Planning and Zoning has completed?**

CL: The department has a long history of successful projects that are beacons of accomplishments on the local, regional, and state level. Most recently, however, what I am most proud of is the way that the department has successfully navigated a reorganization and staff turnover. All four members of our department have been in their current positions for less than one year, with three of the four hired only in the fall. We were quickly able to get not only the core functions of the department operational again, but have been able to streamline and improve processes.



**ATS: How has your department overcome obstacles resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic?**

CL: Many planning and zoning offices around the state struggled with office shutdowns. Fortunately, we were successfully poised with online records and permitting systems. A community member could, from their own breakfast table if they wished, log on and see the permit history for their property or apply and pay for a permit, without ever leaving their home. We met with residents under a tent in the backyard of Town Hall or on the front porch so we could continue to deliver our services during the pandemic as well. We held informal meetings for permit applicants under a tent and on the porch too. Meetings with the Development Review Board and Planning Commission proceeded in a virtual setting throughout the difficult times as well.



**ATS: What can we expect to hear about coming up in the future for your department?**

CL: While some have been mentioned already and with triaging basic functions complete, we are excited to move on to working on the projects identified by the community in the 2019 Town Plan. As touched upon earlier, this begins with a review and probable changes to the area of East Lakeshore Drive, and may include other exciting long-range projects as well.

**ATS: You also coordinate the Planning Commission. What does this committee do for the Town? Are there open member positions, volunteer opportunities, or other possibilities for the community to become involved?**

CL: The Planning Commission has two very exciting jobs. First, it works with the community to outline its major goals and objectives to envision the future of the town. This work largely appears in the Town Plan, which has historically been updated every five years. It then uses this very important document to inform and create the rules by which land development and land use can occur. It is a five-member body, appointed by the Selectboard for terms of up to three years. There is currently one open position. Anyone interested should contact me to learn more, and you can reach me at 802-264-5602 or [CLaRose@colchestervt.gov](mailto:CLaRose@colchestervt.gov). The Planning Commission, also welcomes



participation at our meetings and hearings on planning and projects, both in person and through feedback in writing.



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

CL: The best way to stay updated is through our page on the Town website, in the Town Newsletter, and at Town meetings. Occasionally we'll have posts on the Town's social media too. We are in the process of developing other ways of outreach and publicity regarding our services as well.

## Department Updates

### Assessor's Office

The Assessor's office sent out the "Change of Assessment Notices" for the 2022 Grand List (GL) on Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the Grand List is now available at the Clerk's office.

The 2022 GL grew \$19,262,000 over the 2021 GL to a total of \$2,240,919,100. There were 435 assessment changes and notices mailed, of which 328 assessments increased and 106 assessments decreased.



Friday, June 17<sup>th</sup> Appeal Hearings with the Listers will be occurring.

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## Upcoming Town Meetings

**Selectboard:** Tuesday, June 14, 6:00 pm at the Colchester Town Offices, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://www.bit.ly/Colchester-SB-Agendas)

**Library Board of Trustees:** Thursday, June 16, 4:30 pm, in the Burnham Room of the Burnham Memorial Library.

**Planning Commission:** Tuesday, June 21, 7:00 pm, at the Colchester Town Offices, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Outer Bay Conference Room, 781 Blakely Road.

**Agendas available:** <http://clerkshq.com/Colchester-vt>

**Note:** Agendas are posted at least 48 hours before meetings, so you may find past agendas when clicking the link. Revisiting the link closer to the date of the meeting should provide you with the current agenda.

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For more information or to comment, call 802-264-5509 or email [townmanager@colchestervt.gov](mailto:townmanager@colchestervt.gov)