

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REPORT

Good communication is essential to an open, participatory town government. Last spring the Board was challenged with a question from a voter concerning what we could do to improve communication – to make citizens more aware of what is happening in the town and in town government. We believe that we have taken a giant step forward in this area through the unveiling of a new town website. After viewing the websites of several towns in New Hampshire and surrounding states the Board of Selectmen contracted with Virtual Town and School to build the town site. Working with the Town Administrator and other staff members the company created an attractive, interactive site that will enhance communication with the community and present a professional image to all who log on.

There have also been improvements to the cable channel. Through the work of new members of the Cable Committee the bulletin board has been kept up to date and running smoothly. A new piece of equipment approved by the Board should make it easier to record and replay programs on a regular basis. Although basic in nature, another communication improvement is an information sheet that was included in the property tax bills last June, and updated for the mailing in November. The sheet more clearly explains a variety of options available to the taxpayer including information on possible exemptions, credits, and abatements, as well as payment plan options. There will no doubt be further refinement to the sheet for future tax mailings.

Common sense dictates that to preserve a building you start by keeping a good roof on it. The summer of 2013 was a season of roof replacement. The Town Office Building, the Paige Memorial Library, and the Clinton Grove Academy all received new roofs. The first two were paid for out of the Government Building and Maintenance Fund, while the entire roofing job at Clinton Grove Academy was covered by a Moose Plate Grant secured through the efforts of Weare Historical Society President Sherry Burdick. A new copper cap was put on the gazebo in Weare Center to halt the deterioration of that structure as well.

There was also a renewed focus on the Town Hall in 2013. In the spring a new fire alarm system was installed in the building. This system is connected to a monitoring service the same as the Town Office Building and the library, but also includes a visual and audible alarm on the exterior of the building. The Board recently approved the addition of a freeze alarm after an incident that resulted in frozen pipes this winter. Perhaps the most noticeable change to the Town Hall is the new doors. The wider single door on each side is in keeping with the original design of the building. The sill under the front of the building also needed major repair before the doors could be installed. The doors will be painted when weather permits and permanent steps will be installed in the front of the building. All of the work on the Town Hall was paid for through a special bequest from the Mildred Hall estate for the maintenance of that building. The Board is also grateful to Tyler DeStefano and all those who helped him with his Boy Scout project that resulted in the new flag pole in front of the building.

With the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations on the horizon there is still much to be done on the town buildings. As a centerpiece of our town the gazebo needs some major sprucing up. We have an estimate for painting the façade and other trim on the Stone Building and will also be painting

the trim on the Town Office Building. Both projects require the removal of lead paint. After this winters experience with frozen pipes we find there is also a need to replace the boiler in the Town Hall. Voters will find an article on the Town Warrant asking to replenish the funds in the Government Building and Maintenance Fund to complete these projects and others as they arise.

In 2012 the Board began work on an ordinance related to special details in the Police Department. Patented after an ordinance in the Town of Auburn, the Traffic Control in Construction Zone Ordinance was approved after a public hearing in the spring of 2013. The ordinance defines the level of traffic control needed on all the roads in town in order to provide for public safety. Out of nearly 200 roads in the town approximately 30 are singled out as needing live traffic control such as police or professional flaggers.

In May, 2013, Chief Gregory Begin retired from the Police Department. Because of the passage of an article on the town warrant in March, which changed the chief's position to an appointed rather than elected position, the Board of Selectmen was charged with finding a new chief. The Board contracted with Municipal Resources, Inc. to handle the search and recruiting process. After an extensive search and screening process, MRI selected three candidates for the Board to interview. Following a second round of interviews, the Board selected John Velleca as our new chief. Chief Velleca assumed full time duty with the department on November 1, 2013.

Because of retirements and other vacancies, the Police Department had been short handed for most of the year. In November and December Chief Velleca filled four vacancies with the hiring of four new recruits. Three of the new officers are presently attending the police academy while the fourth is doing field training and will attend the academy in the spring. Voters will also see that there in an article on the 2014 warrant calling for two additional officers. The overtime line in the Police Department budget has often come under scrutiny. Adding these additional officers will make 24 hour coverage more feasible without excessive overtime. It will also mean a safer community with police officers working reasonable schedules.

The Board of Selectmen successfully negotiated tentative agreements with two labor unions in 2013. These agreements will be on the warrant for voter approval in March. Each of the proposals includes a change in insurance plans that mean substantial long term savings in health insurance costs to the town. The three year agreements with the Public Works and Police Departments will stabilize the work force while saving time and money in the collective bargaining process.

In March of 2013 voters approved the purchase of 137 acres of conservation land on East Road. The land, referred to as the Shmid/Banks property, will be protected under an easement held by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Twenty acres of the property will be set aside for town use. Board members toured the property with a surveyor in the fall to get a better picture of the contours of the 20 acres and to ascertain its potential use. A gravel pit on the site will immediately provide materials for the Highway Department. Besides the gravel, there is certainly no shortage of stone for crushing. Although the projects will be challenging, there is also space for future athletic fields. The more than 100 acres of farmland and forest that will be put into conservation holds special value because it is contiguous to other protected land.

A recent statistic noted by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Association as part of a joint economic project with Central New Hampshire Planning states that 85 per cent of people in Weare commute out of town to work. In spite of long commutes and families to care for, almost every month potential volunteers come before the Board of Selectmen to be interviewed for positions on our many committees, boards, and commissions. They serve on the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the ZBA, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Board of Fire Wards, and as Trustees of Trust Funds, the Library, and Cemeteries. They fill the ranks of so many other formal and temporary committees, commissions, and societies –all without pay – to keep our community running. As we look to land conservation to protect the rural character of the town, we cannot overlook volunteerism as another factor in preserving what we value most in our community. A special thanks to so many who give so much.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas S. Clow, Chairman  
Richard Butt, Vice Chairman  
Keith Lacasse, Selectman  
John Lawton, Selectman  
James Leary, Selectman