

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REPORT

It started as a year of promise and celebration for the Town of Weare. 2014 was the Town's 250th anniversary, and a group of hard working volunteers had planned special events for every month from January through September. A new town website was nearing completion and would soon go online to improve communication with the citizens of the town. The previous fall the town had appointed a new police chief who took office on November 1, 2013 with a promise of positive changes after a year of turmoil in that department. The Board looked forward to a year of pride in its accomplishments and an appreciation of the heritage of the town.

The changes in the police department came fast with new officers recruited, most with local connections, and a focus on community policing. Work stations within the building were upgraded giving the patrol room an air of professionalism. The record keeping system was revamped and secured. New evidence lockers were installed to bring the handling of evidence up to industry standards. Even the graphics on the police cars were changed to sport a new image with a slogan of "Keeping the Peace." In the spring the Weare Police Department became the first in the state to mandate that all officers wear body cameras to increase accountability when interacting with the public. Perhaps most important, there was a new emphasis on writing and rewriting department policies and training officers to follow those policies. In March Sean Kelly was hired as a consultant to write these policies to meet the standards of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Kelly had 26 years experience as a police officer and had worked with communities in several other states to bring their departments up to CALEA standards.

In June Sean Kelly was appointed as Interim Deputy Chief of the Police Department upon the recommendation of Chief John Velleca and approval by the Board of Selectman. Kelly continued work on policy development while providing leadership as the second in command in the chief's absence. The appointment proved fortunate for the town when in October Velleca resigned from his position following a domestic violence accusation, which was brought against him and was investigated by the New Hampshire Attorney General's office. That office found no grounds for criminal prosecution but questioned Velleca's credibility to remain in his position as chief of police.

Following Velleca's resignation Sean Kelly was appointed as interim Chief of Police. He still holds that position while the Board of Selectmen conducts a search for a new chief. On November 19, the Board held a public forum to allow citizens to give their input on the Police Department and the process for selecting new leadership for that department.

At the polls in March Jennifer Bohl was elected to the Board of Selectman to take the seat that Richard Butt had held for six years, and Keith Lacasse was reelected to another three year term. Several weeks later Thomas Clow was reelected as chairman by the Board, and Keith Lacasse was chosen as vice chairman. The selectmen's proposed budget was defeated in March leading to a default budget for 2014; however, a number of other articles were approved by the voters. Money was approved to supplement state funding for the replacement of Peaslee Road Bridge. The bridge had been red listed by the state for a number of years. Construction for replacement was started in the fall. Voters also approved the purchase of a new ten wheel plow truck and a

new pickup truck for DPW. A three year collective bargaining agreement with public works employees was approved as well. An article giving raises to non-union employees was approved; however, a three year agreement with police union was not. The approved articles included changes to the health insurance plan that saved the town thousands of dollars. A one year agreement with the police union will be on the ballot in 2015 with additional savings for the town in health insurance costs as part of the contract.

In late October the Board of Selectmen set the tax rate. This rate largely reflects the choices that voters make when they go to the polls in March. Each year in setting the tax the Board looks at what money is available in what is known as the undesignated fund balance. If there is enough available in that fund, the Board uses some of it to offset taxes while preserving enough in the fund to maintain an adequate cash flow throughout the following year. In 2014 the Board used \$200,000.00 for that purpose. That allowed it to set a town tax rate of \$3.86 and an overall rate of \$22.21. Those figures represent the second lowest tax rate of all towns within a 15 mile radius of Weare.

Negotiations on the purchase of 41 plus acres of land on East Road began in May, and the purchase was finalized in December. The property was offered to the town by Gordon and Paula Brown and also included a barn that is divided into several sections. The property is adjacent to Center Square Cemetery and will be used in part for additional cemetery space. A wooded portion of the property will be used for green burials – the scattering of ashes. The agreement with the Browns specified that the barn would be for the use of the Weare Historical Society. An article on the 2015 warrant will allow the town to enter into a long term lease with the Historical Society for the use of the building for cold storage of large artifacts and antique farm implements. The property was purchased for \$170,000.00 with \$85,000 coming from the Charles and Ethel Eastman Fund and the remainder from the Cemetery Cy Pres Account. The acquisition of this property means most of the land beyond the cemetery on the right side of East Road, coming from Weare Center, is now either owned by the town or protected by conservation easements.

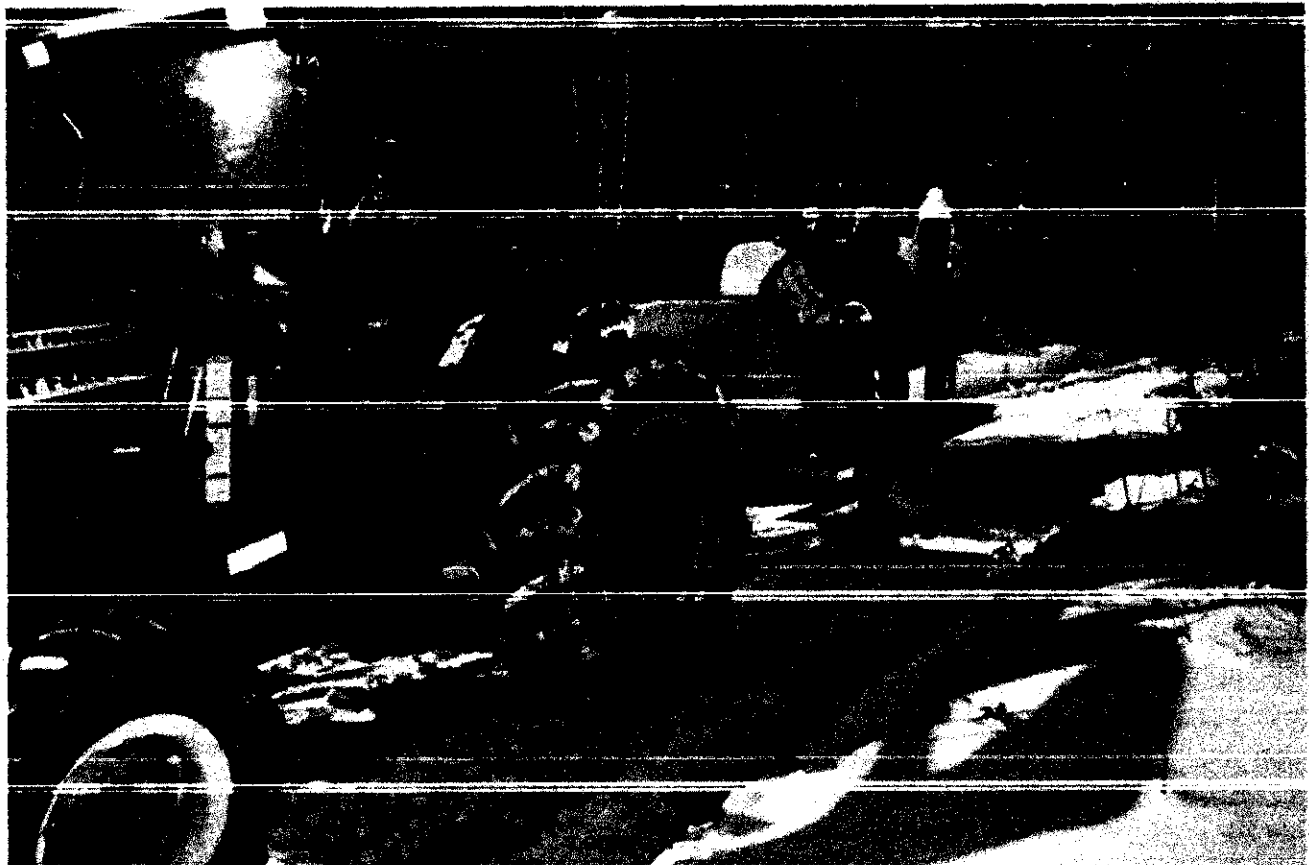
Beginning with a winter field day on a very cold day in January and ending with a luncheon at the high school in September to commemorate the signing of the town charter, the 250th Anniversary Committee put together programs throughout the year to help us put aside the pressures of today and appreciate the history of our town. From a little girls' tea party to an old fashion lawn party; from a beard and mustache contest to an Old Home Day car show; from a chili chowder fest to an ice cream social; there was something for everyone. Committee members deserve the thanks and appreciation of the Board of Selectmen and of all the members of our community.

History is living phenomenon. We are creating it through our actions each day. By preserving our rural environment with acquisitions and easements like those on East Road, we are passing something on to those who will be celebrating the 300th anniversary of our town and many anniversaries beyond that. Fifty years from now or a hundred years from now people will be able to travel down that road and see it much as we see it today, thanks to the history making foresight of those who put together those projects.

It did start as a year of promise and, although there were some discouraging events along the way, in many respects it remained a year to celebrate and appreciate. There are many challenges that lie ahead in 2015 for this board and for the community at large. First and foremost we have to find a new police chief who can build a level of trust in that department so that we all know that our town is safe. There are other challenges as well. Although a lot of progress has been made, many of our public buildings still need repair inside and out. We also have to ensure that safety services beyond the police department are also adequate for the town. We ask for your trust and support in these endeavors and in others that will surely arise in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas S. Clow, Chairman
Keith R. Lacasse, Vice Chairman
John Lawton, Selectman
James Leary, Selectman
Jennifer Bohl, Selectman



250th Anniversary – Sleigh Rides during January Winter Festival