

## Selectboard Report

Westford is an amazing mix of professionalism and small town culture, knowing your neighbors and continuously improving how we do things. We'd like to thank our amazing Town staff and many community volunteers for making Westford such a unique place. For a small town, we certainly accomplish a lot, and do it well, with pretty limited resources. We are thankful for dedicated and thoughtful staff who care about our community and for volunteers who spend a considerable amount of time making sure Westford is a great place to live.

### Town Staff

**Road Crew** – Brent Meacham resigned as Road Foreman in September 2017. Westford resident John Roberts was hired as Interim Road Foreman while the Selectboard went through the application and interview process. We were fortunate to have three qualified applicants. After careful consideration, the Selectboard hired John Roberts in November. John has extensive experience as a foreman and heavy equipment operator, as well as owning and operating his own excavation business.

In March 2017 Trevor Barrows was hired to replace Mark Brito who left employment due to a tragic event that prevented him from returning. In September 2017, Trevor resigned from the position. The Town was fortunate Sean Cushing, a Westford resident, applied. Sean was hired in November. Sean has many years of experience as a heavy equipment operator, including excavation and snow removal.

**Rec Coordinator** – In April 2017, Rebekah Gwozdz resigned as Rec Coordinator to pursue a career as a director for a memory care facility. Rebekah brought energy and creativity to the Recreation Department and was resourceful in seeking donations and grants. Tom Schmidt was hired in June to fill the role of Rec Coordinator. Tom has a passion for athletics and outdoor activities and a background in sports marketing and advertising.

**Dog Warden** – In December 2016, Diane Forsey resigned as Dog Warden. Diane served in this position for several years and was very successful in reuniting dogs with their owners. She ran a rescue operation and therefore had accommodations for stray dogs. Unfortunately, the Selectboard has been unable to find someone to fill the vacancy. If you like dogs and would like to serve the Town in this capacity, please contact the Town Office for more information.

### Financial Practices

**Independent Professional Audit** – Fothergill, Segale and Valley, a certified public account firm located in Montpelier audited the FY17 financial records. The firm's findings and draft report were delivered to the Selectboard in December 2017. The audit results are summarized in the Town Report, and the full audit report is available on the Town website.

The auditors had primarily positive findings about our accounting practices. According to the audit, improvements must be made in terms of the Town's procedure for recording capital assets. As such, the Selectboard with guidance from the Treasurer and staff will address this deficiency in the coming months.

Fogergill, Segale and Valley and the Town had a three-year contract that expired with the most recent audit (FY17). The Town will solicit proposals from qualified firms and enter into a contract to audit future fiscal years beginning with FY18.

**Proposed Budget (FY 2019)** – The Town budget proposal for next fiscal year (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019) is detailed in the tables contained in the Town Report. As it is every year, the budget is a balancing act between necessary community investments, conservative fiscal spending, and the resulting implications for taxes. There was a surplus of approximately \$68,000 dollars from FY 2017 and the proposed budget includes using \$60,000 of that surplus to reduce taxes. The remainder of the surplus is proposed to be applied to the "Rainy Day" reserve which is used to pay for unforeseen, unfunded projects.

The proposed budget would result in an increase of 5.194% in your tax bill. For perspective, this tax increase would correspond to about \$66.80 in additional taxes for a property assessed at \$200,000 and \$133.60 for property assessed at \$400,000.

After several years, the Town finally received the grants funds for the Seymour Road Bridge project from FEMA and the State of Vermont. The Town submitted the paperwork to close out the grants in January 2016. The Town received final payment in August 2017.

#### Road Projects

Three major road projects were completed this year with a combination of town road crew and contracted services. Brookside Road, Osgood Hill Road and Woods Hollow Road had sections ditched, new culverts installed, rock-lined or seeded and mulched, and in some cases rebuilt to comply with the Vermont's Municipal Roads General Permit requirements for stormwater. The Town was fortunate to receive grants for each of the projects to help offset the cost. These three projects are the beginning of several years of work to bring all the town roads into compliance. The Town is working closely with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and VTrans to prioritize projects. Grant applications for Old #11 Road, Rubaud Road and Rogers Road have been submitted for 2018.

#### Sale of Spiller Property

In October 2016, the Town accepted an offer made by Westford resident Jeff Hutchins to purchase the Spiller lot. The sale has had many bumps in the road. The first thing the Town needed to do was officially lay out Common Road. This involved researching several parcels, particularly the Town Common, which was deeded to the Town in two deeds in the 1800s. In November, the Selectboard received a draft survey of the road and warned an examination of premises and public hearing, which is part of the legal process for laying out the road. In December, after the examination and hearing, the Selectboard voted to lay out the road based on the survey submitted.

After the appeal period for laying out the road expires, the Town needs to file with the court a Quiet Title for the land south of the Common. The land involved in this process has a public use easement on it. In order to sell any property, the Town owns south of the Common Road right-of-way, the easement needs to be removed. The Town is at the mercy of the court's schedule

with regard to the processing of this request. We hope to get word from the court within a few months after the filing so the Town can move forward with the sale.

This process has taken over a year so far and is still not complete. We are extremely grateful for the patience of Jeff Hutchins and his realtor, Heather Armata, during this process.

#### Jackson Farm & Forest Project

The Jackson Farm & Forest Project took much longer than anticipated. In January 2018, the land was conveyed to the Town of Westford and the Pouliots with conservation easements. The Town, the Planning Commission, Vermont Land Trust and other entities will be working collaboratively on a trail system and maintain the property as dictated by the easement.

The Selectboard would like to thank everyone who was involved in this endeavor. It took many hands to pull this together and keep it moving forward to the end goal.

#### School Parcels

In March 2017, the 20-acre lot jointly owned by the Town of Westford and the Westford School District was sold. The proceeds from the sale were split equally between the entities.

On June 27, 2017, two of the three parcels owned by the Westford School District surrounding the school building were deeded to the Town of Westford per the vote that occurred on October 11, 2016. The Selectboard and School Board worked together over several months to ensure that the current use of the properties remained the same, which was the desire of Westford residents. An Easement Deed was executed to ensure that the parking lot and the trailhead for trails, both located on the parcel being retained by the School, are accessible to users. A Shared Use Agreement was signed by the School and Town to allow the School to continue its use of the sports fields on the land conveyed to the Town and for the Town to continue to use the school building. The Planning Commission attended several meetings to assist with crafting the Easement Deed and the Shared Use Agreement and we're appreciative for their input.

#### Zoning Regulations

In April the Planning Commission submitted to the Selectboard revised Zoning Regulations. The revisions were made to correct inadvertent hurdles discovered when going through the Development Review Board and Zoning Administrator process. The Selectboard held a public hearing in July 2017 and approved the revised regulations.

Respectfully submitted,  
Casey Mathieu  
Dave Tilton  
Allison Hope