

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of
December 8, 2014

While by no means a total representation of all the work performed by the Town, the following information highlights some activities which occurred:

Town Manager's Office—Dawn Francis, Town Manager

We need your thoughts about a possible Local Option Tax in Colchester which is a funding source used by other communities in the region and statewide. The Selectboard voted to warn the topic of a possible Local Option Tax for two public hearings in January to be held on January 13th and January 27th. They have until the 27th to decide whether or not to advance the issue to a vote by Australian ballot at the March town meeting.

One of the proposals for use of the LOT to the Selectboard was offered by the Colchester Community Development Corp (members of the business community). If the LOT were used to reduce the overall debt load of the Town it would have the effect of:

- Paying off the Town's current debt which will reduce taxpayers' tax burden by 5%
- Diversifying and expanding revenue sources to pay for same. (87% of tax would be paid by non-Colchester residents)
- Allowing the possibility of funding for future infrastructure needs subject to voter approval) that will address existing needs and support sustainable economic growth.

Additional information: <http://www.colchestervt.gov/Manager/SelectBoard.shtml>

The proposed language requires that LOT funding be dedicated only to capital expenses that have been authorized by specific voter approval. The Town's debt service for FY 16 is \$671,648 and is comprised of the Bayside property, municipal buildings on Blakely road, a Town-wide street light energy conservation project, and a drainage project in the Bellwood neighborhood. The Selectboard and Administration are committed to finding ways to reduce your tax bill and identifying sustainable ways to pay for needed infrastructure.

For more information about the Town Manager's Office, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Manager/index.shtml> or call (802) 264-5509.

Assessor's Office—Bob Vickery, Assessor

- The Assessor's Office has lodged the Fiscal Year 2015 Grand List (GL) in the Colchester Town Clerk's office
- An estimate of the Grand List growth has been submitted to the Finance department; this estimate is used in the budgeting process and will be revised periodically until the Town Meeting in March
- The Assessor is continuing the inspection of all new construction that has been started or finished over the course of the summer
- In the coming months and continuing through the spring the focus will be on interior inspections of properties that have renovated

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.

- We have been reviewing condominium complexes and looking for inequities in assessment values among the various complexes.

For more information about the Assessor’s Department, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Assessor/assessorHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5670.

Finance Department—Aaron Frank, Assistant Town Manager/CFO

Recent activities included:

- We have completed FY 14 external audit and there are no findings. The auditor will present a report to the Selectboard in January.
- After four months of FY 15 we are 1% over budget for revenues and 0.6% under for expenses.
- Much of the summer and fall is devoted to preparing the budget with the departments and Selectboard. Here is the current proposal:

FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET & TAX RATE

- The General Fund operating budget has increased by \$152,605 or 1.3%
 - Ten of the twenty-six program areas reduced expenses for FY 16
- The net operating budget after subtracting non-property tax revenues has increased by \$156,497 or 1.62%.
- The net municipal liability, which includes the voter approved debt and capital plans in addition to the net operating budget, has increased by, \$229,226 or 2.0%.
- Our assessor is predicting a 1.1% increase in property values in Colchester. The Grand List, taxable property divided by 100, is expected to increase from \$20,033,046 to \$20,255,046.
- Tax rate is net municipal liability of \$11,676,040, divided by grand list \$20,255,046, and is expressed in taxes per 100 dollars of property value
- Based on the proposed FY 16 budget, the tax rate will be to \$0.5765.
- Increase in tax rate is projected at 0.51 cents or an 0.89% increase
- Changes in the tax rate for various assessed values are listed below:

Assessed Value	FY 16 Tax Increase	Weekly Tax Increase
\$150,000	\$7.62	\$0.15
\$200,000	\$10.16	\$0.20
\$250,000	\$12.70	\$0.24
\$300,000	\$15.24	\$0.29
\$350,000	\$17.78	\$0.34
\$400,000	\$20.32	\$0.39
\$450,000	\$22.86	\$0.44

For more information about the Finance Department, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Finance/financeHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5650.

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.

Parks and Recreation Department—Glen Cuttitta, Director

The following are highlights from the recreation division of Colchester's Parks and Recreation Department:

- Meeting with LIFE Advisory Board to identify target programs for Winter/ Spring season
- Coordinating LIFE program Instructors
- LIFE program is in full swing with many participants registering for programs
- Youth Basketball has started practicing, with games taking place after the holidays
- Attended the Youth Basketball Scheduling Meeting
- Preparing for Dinner with Santa program on December 12th
- Winter/Spring program brochure is complete and will be going to the printers
- Winter/Spring program brochures should arrive in mailboxes the week of December 29th
- ACE Afterschool program currently being run in four Colchester Schools
- Working on grant for Building Bright Futures program
- Planning Winter Carnival for 2015. Carnival will take place on Feb. 6 & 7
- Looking for Winter Carnival volunteers. Contact us at 264-5640 if interested
- Visited all Colchester Cemeteries and will be evaluating maintenance status of each
- Ongoing Maintenance of Colchester Cemeteries
- Developing a long term maintenance and repair plan for the Colchester Cemeteries
- Working with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to create a trail network at the new Village Park
- Identifying space need for new Parks Maintenance building at Airport Park
- Call to Artists for Artistic Bike Racks
- At the Recreation Advisory Board meeting we discussed our community project, which will be creating artistic bike racks to be placed in different locations in the community.

For more information about the Parks and Recreation Department, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Recreation/parksNRec.shtml> or call (802) 264-5640.

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.