

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of

January 5, 2015

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

The Colchester Selectboard is seeking your input on an important issue for our community. We have tried to hold down spending while seeking other revenue sources to reduce the property tax burden on Colchester taxpayers. A Local Option Tax on rooms, meals, sales and alcohol adopted in Williston, South Burlington, Burlington and St. Albans Town has resulted in lower property tax rates in these towns. We are considering this revenue source, of which it is estimated 87 % would be paid by non-residents of Colchester. It is estimated that a Local Option Tax in Colchester could generate as much as \$1.2 million per year.

The Selectboard has warned two public hearings on January 13 and January 27 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Meeting Hall, 830 Main Street, Colchester to obtain public input on a proposal to use the Local Option Tax for debt reduction and lowering taxes.

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

Finance Department—Aaron Frank, Assistant Town Manager/CFO

FY 16 Budget Proposal

The proposed FY 16 Town operating budget, covering twenty six areas of expenditure, was developed after six meetings and represents a 1.3% increase over the FY15 budget, the lowest increase in over a decade (excepting the reappraisal year). The public shared their opinions through paper, online, and email surveys, with responses from 8% of voters. In general, residents wanted to maintain the current level of services, but also wanted to reduce expenses and look to funding other than property taxes to support Town services.

Ten of the expense areas are reduced by the Selectboard and Town Administration. Cost containment measures include:

- Combining positions across departments
- Contracting services and sharing equipment with other municipalities
- Reducing the town hall vehicle fleet from four to two
- Rebidding our telecommunications services
- Including more overhead costs in grants and contracted services

The amount to be raised by property taxes is \$9,799,483 for the operating budget and \$1,876,558 for the capital budget, a total of \$11,676,040. We project \$22,200,000 in increased property valuation, driven by new construction in our community. This increases the grand list growth to 1.11% over 2014. Under this budget, a \$300,000 property would have a municipal tax of \$1,792, an increase of \$15.24 or 0.89% from the previous year.

Additional detail on the budget: <http://www.colchestervt.gov/Manager/TownMeeting.shtml>

Windemere Mobile Home Park Improvements

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

In June of 2013, Town voters authorized a bond of up to \$500,000 for water and sewer improvements to Windemere Mobile Home Park where about 80 Colchester families reside. Construction of new water and sewer mains and services to each lot has been completed along with stormwater and paving improvements. This bond is being paid by the Town with revenues from the Park owner, The Housing Foundation, Inc.

Public Safety Dispatch

The Town of Colchester provides public safety dispatch services under contract to the Town of Milton whereby Milton pays about 35% of the costs of our dispatch operation. Additionally, Milton has agreed to contribute to management and overhead costs which reduces Town funding of dispatch for FY 16 and in future years. We have made a similar proposal to City of Winooski to further leverage our resources.

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

Town Clerk's Office—Karen Richard, Town Clerk

- As this year winds down it is time to gear up for the next election, which is Town Meeting on Tuesday March 3, 2015. As we prepare to advertise the expired terms for the many elected positions it is appropriate to thank all of the elected officials. They are our dedicated citizens that volunteer their time and efforts for the betterment of our community. The Town could not survive without our loyal volunteers.
- The following positions will be on the ballot in March: Selectman, 2 Year, currently held by Marc Landry; Selectman 3 Year, currently held by Nadine Scibek; Town Clerk/Treasurer, 2 Year, currently held by Karen Richard; Moderator, 1 Year, currently held by Jerry Flanagan; School Board, 2 Year, currently held by Christine Shepard; School Board, 3 Year, currently held by Mike Rogers; Champlain Water District Representative, 3 Year, currently held by Karen Richard; and Library Trustee, 5 Year, currently held by Marcia Devino. There are vacancies on the Cemetery Commission, which is transitioning from an elected position to an appointed position with the recent charter changes approved in November, but not yet passed in Legislature. We thank these people for their past commitment and future challenge if they should decide to run again.
- In order to run for any of the above mentioned offices you would need to submit a petition, stating which office you are running for, and the length of the term. We cannot accept petitions that lack the term of office. If you have questions or would like blank petitions please contact us. The petitions are due Monday, January 26th at 5 p.m.
- Please remember if your voting district is District 9-1 (comprised of the area east of I-89, the west side of I-89 north of the Malletts Creek inlet and excluding the south side of Blakely Road) it is moving to the Colchester High School gymnasium for all future elections starting in March 2015.

For more information about the Town Clerk's Office, <http://colchestervt.gov/TownClerk/townClerkHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5520

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.

- The Assessor's Office is continuing the inspections of all new construction that has been started or finished.
- We will be focusing on interior inspections in the coming months of properties that have renovated and will be continuing through the spring.

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

- We have submitted an estimate of the Grand List growth to the Finance Department, this estimate is used in the budgeting process and will be revised periodically until the Town Meeting in March.
- Colchester has received the State Equalization Study and we are reviewing the results. The State Equalization Study determines the Town's Common Level of Appraisal which is used in determining the Town's Residential and Nonresidential Education Tax rates. A 1% change in the CLA will result in roughly a \$0.015 change in the residential tax rate and roughly a \$0.01 change in the nonresidential tax rate.

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

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