

Colchester's Weekly Town News
For the Week of July 21, 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

The Selectboard held a public hearing to obtain comments on proposed changes to our firearms ordinance which has not been updated since 1991. A number of citizens commented on the proposed amendments to the Firearms Ordinance in person and via electronic mail. The Selectboard voted to table the proposed amendments and requested the Firearms Safety Task Force provide their recommendations in light of the public input. These amendments are on our website or at town hall for viewing and your input are welcome.

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.

- The State equalization study for 2015 has started. This is a 3 year sales study that will determine the Common Level of Assessment (CLA). The CLA is used in the formula to determine Colchester's State Education Tax rate.
- The higher the percentage of the CLA, the lower the tax rate.
- The closer the CLA is to 100%, the closer the assessments are to the Fair Market Value
- Over the last four years the CLA has been favorable to the Town:
 - o 2011 99.67%
 - o 2012 97.89%
 - o 2013 98.70%
 - o 2014 98.78%
- The equalization study will be concluded in December 2014, when the State gives the new FY 2016 CLA to the Town.

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.

Town Clerk's Office—Karen Richard, Town Clerk

Tax Bills Were Mailed

- The tax bills were mailed Tuesday, July 14th. Please closely examine your tax bill to make sure that the proper rate has been applied. If you filed your homestead the rate for the education taxes should be the residential rate. The deadline for filing the homestead has been extended to October 15th. Filing late will result in late penalties being applied to the education taxes. The Selectboard voted to reduce the penalty for filing late from 3% to 1 ½ %.
- Taxes are due August 15th. When they are not received on the 15th or postmarked by the U.S. postal service by the 15th they are considered late and subject to an 8% penalty and 1% interest. These rates are set in the charter. The town charter is in the process of being reviewed and we are recommending that the penalty amount be reduced, due to the many requests from the taxpayers.
- You can pay your taxes by check, cash, money order, escrow, auto-debit or credit card. If you pay by credit card there is a convenience fee of 2.6% that is received by the credit card company and not revenue to the town. You can pay by credit card up until midnight on the 15th. Payments will also be accepted in the drop box until midnight on the 15th. Payments received after the 15th in the drop box are considered late and subject to penalty and interest.

Election August 26th - District 9-2 polling location has moved to Malletts Bay School

- There is a state primary election on August 26th. Due to a conflict at the high school the polling location will be moved to Malletts Bay School on Blakely Road. The polling location for District 9-1 is the same: Colchester Meeting House on Main St.
- Since it is a state primary election you will be given four ballots for your district, one ballot for each major party. You do not have to declare a party. You will vote one ballot and deposit 3 ballots into the box for "unused ballots". If you are requesting the ballots to be mailed to you the process is the same. You will be mailed four ballots. You will vote one ballot and deposit the three blank ballots into an envelope marked "unused ballots". You must return all ballots; the ballot that you vote is in one envelope and the 3 blank ballots into another envelope. Please go to the link below to view the Warning and ballots for each district. The ballots are here so feel free to stop by and vote or call 264-5520 with a request for us to mail them to you.

For more information about the Town Clerk's Office

<http://colchestervt.gov/TownClerk/townClerkHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5520

Finance Department—Aaron Frank, Assistant Town Manager/CFO

Recent activities have included:

- Monthly financial report summary: after twelve months, we are 3% under budget on expenses and almost on budget on revenues. Most of the savings are labor related.

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

- We expect to finish FY 14 with revenues exceeding expenses by about \$300,000. The Selectboard has taken \$50,000 of the savings to develop a stormwater utility for public consideration. Currently, stormwater operating expenses are funded by the general fund property tax budget, in the amount of about \$175,000 annually. The stormwater utility could receive revenues from tax exempt properties, reducing the taxes on business and residential parcels. The Selectboard assigned half the remaining savings for accrued leave liabilities, and the other half towards funding the FY 16 budget, so as to reduce the amount of property taxes to be raised.
- Completed changes to computer backup system, reducing \$3,000 in annual operating expenses.
- Working on reductions to telephone bills and increasing reliability of phone system using leased lines, and our voice over internet system.
- Working with the Colchester Police Department, the Town of Milton, and the City of Winooski on expanding our fee for service public safety dispatch operation and growing the non-property tax revenues generated by our dispatch operation.

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.