

# Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week Ending March 28, 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 Colchester Selectboard and town administration has proposed budget cuts resulting in \$129,822 fewer expenditures and reducing the expected tax rate from a 1.64 cent increase to less than one cent. The new proposed budget would result in a \$29.25 annual increase for a house valued at \$300,000 (slightly higher than the average house value).

Given the budget defeat, the town administration has reached out to residents for their feedback and suggestions about the budget as well as the town's overall services. We sought this feedback through a range of media venues, including [the Spotlight](#) and [Front Porch Forum](#) as well as our weekly newsletter in the *Colchester Sun*; in addition, we offered an online suggestion form and a paper and online survey. Please click the links below to access collections of the feedback we received:

[Summary of Survey Results](#)

[Comments from Online Survey](#)

[Blank Online Survey](#)

[Online Form Results \(names removed\)](#)

**Budget Proposal**—please click the links below for greater details on the proposed budget:

[Budget Reduction Recommendations](#)

[Budget Summary](#)

[Budget Proposal](#)

## **Time Line for Budget Revote**

*March 11*—General Selectboard direction provided

*March 18*—Budget work session

*March 25*—Manager presents budget cuts/Selectboard finalizes

*April 8*—Selectboard finalizes cuts and/or signs warning for revote

*April 22*—Public information meeting

*May 6*—Revote by Australian ballot

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 and CFO

Recent activities included:

- Monthly financial report summary—after seven months, we are 2 percent under budget on expenses and on budget on revenues.
- Reviewed citizen budget reduction ideas and satisfaction surveys.
- Responded to Colchester Selectboard request for revised budget considering citizen survey requests to raise more non-tax revenues. We are projecting \$10,000 in additional Colchester Rescue revenues for FY '16 and are planning two 10 percent increases in FY '16—one in July, and another in January. Because of increased permit activity, not a fee increase, we are expecting an additional \$7,500 in zoning/building permit fees and \$2,500 in wastewater permit fees.
- Received approval from the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank for our application for a 2 percent loan for a replacement wastewater system in Windemere Estates Mobile Home Park. This bond of up to \$500,000 was authorized by public vote last summer and will be repaid through revenues from the owner of the park, the Housing Foundation, Inc.
- Working to reduce the number of Town vehicles for office and permitting-related staff by about half.
- Assisted Parks and Recreation Department in restructuring seasonal summer park staff to reduce health care costs under new regulations.
- Updated agreement with CCTA regarding transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities to increase amount of transportation provided due to volunteers by about \$4,500 for the current year.
- Helped write a grant for our volunteer technical rescue department to provide radios that will communicate with local emergency services in the other communities which we also serve.

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

Along with the arrival of spring, the month of April is the month of deadlines.

- April 15 is not only the deadline for filing your income tax; it is also the deadline for filing your homestead. The law has changed, and you *must* file your homestead annually by April 15 if you own and occupy your home as of April 1 of the year of the filing. To file your homestead, you need [Form HS-122, Homestead Declaration and Property Tax Adjustment Claim](#). The HS-122 includes the form to file a property tax adjustment, and you will also need a separate form, [Schedule HI-144, Household Income](#). Both the paper forms and electronic filing can be found online at the Vermont Department of Taxes website at [www.state.vt.us/tax/index.shtml](http://www.state.vt.us/tax/index.shtml). Please call our office if you have any questions regarding the homestead forms at (802) 264-5520.
- April 1 is the deadline to license your dogs without incurring a late fee. It is the law that your dog be licensed and that the rabies vaccination is up to date. If your dog was licensed last year and the rabies certificate is current, you can mail the fee to the Town Clerk's Office, and we will send the tag to you. For more information, call (802) 264-5520.
- The deadline to register for the next election, which is the revote of the town and school budget on May 6, is Wednesday, April 30. If you have moved to town recently and have not had the opportunity to register to vote, please stop by our office or give us a call at (802) 264-5520.
- If you need a copy of your tax bill and a receipt for taxes paid in 2013 in order to file your taxes, please call and we can provide the information by phone, e-mail, or mailing.

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

## **Town Assessor—Robert Vickery**

The Assessor's Office will be conducting a field review of the entire town and checking on all permits from now until the end of April.

- The field review will consist of a "drive by" inspection of all properties in town to verify some of the Town's data, such as description, quality, and condition of the property that can be observed from the street.
- If you have been issued a permit(s) within the last year or were under construction as of April 1, 2013, a person from the Assessor's Office will be stopping by to verify any physical changes to your property as a result of the permit(s).
- If the permit(s) is/are for interior renovation, such as finishing a basement, the Assessor's Office will be attempting to contact you for an interior inspection to verify the renovations. If we are unable to conduct an interior inspection of the property, the Certificate of Occupancy will be used to verify completion.
- The purpose of these inspections is to assess all properties in town to the Fair Market Value using the most up-to-date and accurate data possible; this will ensure that no property owners pay more than their fair share of the tax burden.
- If you would like to set up an appointment to have the assessor inspect your property, please call Donna at (802) 264-5670.

The Assessor's Office will be rolling out a new interactive map and assessor data accessed from the Town's website.

- The map is GIS based, and assessment data will be linked to the map so that residents will be able to view parcel maps and corresponding assessment information at the same time.
- Residents will be able to search for parcel information by owner name, street address, or parcel ID #, and the map will automatically zoom in to that parcel. If you know where the parcel is, you could simply click on the parcel on the map, and the assessment data will come up on the left of the screen.
- Residents will be able to print the property record cards, abutter lists, and a copy of the map from home.
- The map will have the Town's zoning information and other map layers, such as flood plains, wet lands, contour lines, and so on.
- Residents will be able to see the aerial view and Bing maps view.
- This new GIS/assessment website will save the Town \$900 per year for web hosting the online mapping and assessment data.
- A link to the GIS/assessment website will be available on the Town's website as soon as all of the data has been updated.

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