

## Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of May 17, 2013

**Preamble:** "Colchester, Vermont, located on Lake Champlain's Malletts Bay, is a diverse, civic-minded community endowed with a rich heritage of commercial, agricultural, recreational, and educational gifts. Proud of the quality of life already enjoyed here, the people of Colchester seek to build upon this foundation to ensure economic prosperity, recreational opportunity, and an entrepreneurial spirit for future generations" – Vision Statement, Heritage Project, 2012.

**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**

This is my first weekly report as Colchester's Town Manager and I am excited about working with all of you. Former Town Manager Al Voegele and I had the opportunity to work for two weeks together and I appreciated his time spent familiarizing me with the community. Al is leaving the town in sound financial shape and with a solid foundation for the future. I've been on a whirlwind listening tour meeting with some of the community's major employers, institutions, department heads and boards/commissions/ committees. Colchester is blessed with many dedicated, engaged, and talented citizens and employees who take an active interest in making their community a better place to live.

Some of the issues I have been getting up to speed on are: Windemere Estates Mobile Home Park – There is information on the town's website and in various news media about this upcoming vote on June 4<sup>th</sup>. An informational meeting is being held on May 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the Colchester Meeting House. The Colchester Selectboard agreed to warn a bond vote for an upgrade to a failing wastewater disposal system for this area which serves 83 mobile home lots and 200 low to moderate income people. This bond vote will allow The Housing Foundation Inc. (a private, non-profit corporation) to secure a no interest loan, which is less expensive than private financing. Colchester is acting as a conduit for federal monies to flow through the state through the town to HFI. If this bond vote is successful, it will not add to Colchester's property tax or wastewater user costs as HFI will be responsible for repayment. Furthermore, the Selectboard is looking into a form of financial surety to minimize our exposure in the unlikely event that HFI is unable to pay us back.

CCTA Membership and Public Transit Service – We are looking into the benefits and costs of joining CCTA to address our future economic, energy and environmental challenges as well as provide an alternative transportation mode for our citizens and employers.

Recruitment of Library Director and Police Chief – We are getting close to hiring a new

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Library Director as a result of a thorough process conducted by the Board of Trustees and the first round of interviews for a Police Chief will be held soon with a committee of community members and law enforcement experts.

Economic Development Future – Stay tuned, as we are evaluating the various entities and options available to us to assist in implementing the economic development goals articulated in the Heritage Plan and a soon to be released Economic Development Action Plan.

Please feel free to share your ideas with me about these issues and others. My email is [dfrancis@colchestervt.gov](mailto:dfrancis@colchestervt.gov) and I look forward to meeting you!

### **Burnham Memorial Library: Hannah Peacock, Assistant Director**

May is going well here at Burnham Library. First off, we'd like to let people know that the library will be open on Saturdays this summer, despite what some of our outdated bookmarks and pamphlets may have said. We apologize for any confusion on that point. The library will, however, be closed on Tuesday, May 21, for the Vermont Library Association Conference, and on Monday, May 27, for Memorial Day. Starting May 25, we'll be accepting donations for our Summer book sale every Saturday morning (9 am-12 pm) at the Old Fire House; donations run until June 22, and the book sale itself takes place from June 28-30. The Friends of the Library are in need of volunteers to help with these donations and the sale; stop by the library, or call 879-7576 to sign-up.

### **IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department**

Nothing new to report.

### **Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief**

During the last week the department recorded 229 Incidents. The top five types were traffic stops, animal problems, suspicious activity, property damage crashes and alarms. While no crimes are listed in the top five, they generally take up much of the department's work load when they occur, such as the recent armed robbery at Finelli's Convenience Store on Route 7. There is no question that seeing suspicious activity in the top five is a good thing as it means citizens are reporting activity that can lead to crime.

### **Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief**

Rescue had a slow week, only responding to 11 calls, and transporting 7 people to the hospital.

We turned over 2 calls while on other calls.

However, we have been busy with public relations events, including getting ready for our

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Annual Family Fun & Safety Night! Join us from 6:00 – 8:00 pm, on Wednesday May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Police Chief Kirker will be grilling hot dogs for us, and there will be demonstrations from Rescue, as well as Officer Dave Dewey and K9 Tazor. We will also have bike helmets for ages 3 and up.

### **Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director**

In the Recreation Division, we will be hosting a lacrosse jamboree this weekend for the U15 Boys Lacrosse teams on Saturday and Sunday at Bayside Park. Staff is preparing the fields and referees for a great weekend of lacrosse. Games will take place on Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon. Preparations continue for the Inaugural Causeway 5/15K race on June 8<sup>th</sup>. This race is limited to 200 runners and we are currently at 144. If you want to join in on the fun register at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com) or visit our office.

Speaking of June 8<sup>th</sup>, that is Charter Day, the celebration of our community's 250 birthday. There is a day full of events. For more information visit [www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov) and you will find the information at the top of the page. Remember, summer is quickly approaching and our department has programs and camps to keep you and your family busy this summer, just visit [www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov) for our summer camp listings.

In the Parks Division, we are finally at full staffing and the parks are starting to look like it is mid-summer. Daily maintenance such as mowing, trimming and field preparation keeps the staff busy. We currently are replacing the lighting in the Airport Park bathrooms. In the next few weeks, we will be meeting with the Fort Ethan Allen Homeowners to discuss a design to replace the current play structure.

As the weather gets warmer, remember that your community has a wonderful park system so get out and use it.

### **Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director**

Paving contract has been awarded to Pike Industries. A schedule is currently being developed with paving expected on Blakely Road, Malletts Bay Avenue, Creek Road, Shetland Lane and Pine Lane.

Engineering services agreement has been awarded for the replacement of sidewalks within Fort Ethan Allen. The project is being funded by surplus federal grant funds previously secured for the construction of the Campus Connector Road.

Engineering proposals are being requested for the design of the West Lakeshore Shared Use Path. The work will be funded with state and federal grants. To date, approximately \$540,000 in grants has been secured for this project.

Construction of sidewalks at Exit 16 is beginning this week and is expected to be completed later this summer. Funding for this project is being provided from state and federal grants.

Preliminary engineering for the River Road sidewalk project has been completed. The

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project is now proceeding into the right-of-way phase.

Design and permitting are continuing to progress for the expanded water storage tank on Water Tower Hill.

The right-of-way process is being completed for the reconstruction of the Meadow Drive ditch. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources continues to evaluate the environmental permit package submitted by the Town. This project is being funded by federal funds associated with the 2011 federal damage declaration.

Planning meetings were conducted for both the Exit 17 interchange as well as Vt. Rt. 2A and Severance Road corridors for transportation improvements that we hope to have addressed as part of the Circ. Alternatives Process.

The Selectboard selected preferred design alternatives for the Laker Lane/Blakely Road and Prim Road/West Lakeshore Drive intersections. The intent is to advance both of these projects through the Circ. Alternatives process where they would be funded 100% with state and federal dollars.

#### **Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director**

On May 14<sup>th</sup> the Select Board approved changes to Chapter One (General Provisions), Chapter Four (Building Code and Construction), Chapter Seven (Fire Prevention), and Eight (On-Site Sewage Disposal and Potable Water) of the Colchester Code of Ordinances. These changes include increasing waiver authority of the fire regulations. The changes go into effect 60 days from the date of approval. As of July 14, 2013 camp conversions in areas served by fire hydrants will no longer be required to install sprinkler systems to convert. On May 7<sup>th</sup> the Planning Commission received input from several property owners at their meeting regarding a proposal to rezone some of the Heineberg Drive area from GD1 to R2. The Commission resoundingly heard opposition to this plan and is taking this under advisement to revamp the plan.

#### **Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk**

In the last four years, we have made tremendous progress in making our information more readily available for our residents. On our website you are able to access the agendas, minutes and backup information for the Selectboard, Development Review Board and Planning Commission. The town charter is available, as well as the Code of Ordinances. All the documents are searchable. If you want to know the projects that are being planned in town you can visit the agenda and minutes of the Development Review Board. You can view the application and engineered plans. If you would like to view the financial report that is being presented at the next Selectboard meeting you would click on the agenda and minutes of the Selectboard.

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In the past year there have been 44,445 hits to that page of the website, which are 122 hits per day from 7,013 different visitors. This is proof that the public is accessing the information on a regular basis. The link to this information is:

<http://clerkshq.com/default.ashx?clientsite=Colchester-vt>

**Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor**

We are getting close to finalizing the 2013 Grand List. The “Change of Assessment Notices” will be sent out on or around May 31<sup>st</sup>. Only the property owners that had a change in their assessments will receive a “Change of Assessment Notice.” There will be a posting of the “Abstract” Grand List in the Colchester Sun, as well as posted at 5 different places around town; the Library, Mazza’s store, Shaws, the Town Offices, and the Post Office. The Abstract Grand List will be available for review at the Town Offices on the day of the posting. If you have any questions please contact the Assessor’s Office @ (802) 264-5670.

**Finance – Joan Boehm, Asst. Town Manager/CFO**

*Comparison of Colchester Debt with Other Local Municipalities*

Periodically, I compare the Town of Colchester to other municipalities in the area for various aspects of financial condition. This week I am comparing total debt (governmental & business-type) per capita to nine other local municipalities. Colchester ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in lowest debt per capita of the communities compared. Here are the amounts per capita: Essex \$8, Essex Jct. \$180, Colchester \$513, Milton \$808, Williston \$827, St Albans \$1,464, Shelburne \$2,042, South Burlington \$2,372, Winooski \$3,996, Burlington \$4,440.

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