

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of November 2, 2012

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:

Burnham Memorial Library: Rubi Simon, Director

Here at the library, the biggest news was the rescheduling of our Kids' Halloween Party due to weather concerns. It's going to take place on Monday, Nov. 5th from 4-5:30 pm, and you can call to sign up. Many of our staff dressed up as bats on Wednesday, inspired by Brian Lies' book "Bats at the Library" - check out our Facebook page to see the photos. Next week, we'll have our second session on Planning for College Costs, put on by 123College.com. We'll also have our usual story times, music, yoga, and more. Finally, the library is looking for collectors and artists to show off their stuff in our display cases - let us know if you might be interested!

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

This has been a very busy week. Preparations were made to have laptops and telephones moved from the Town Office building to the Emergency Operations Center in the police building in the event that Hurricane Sandy caused major problems in our area. Laptops were setup so that contact with the Town's network could be maintained and that internet access to state and federal information was available. Fortunately we never had to use our emergency plan, but it was good practice for the next event.

It's also time to prepare and test laptops for the Town Clerk's office. These laptops are used at the polling locations so that the Clerks can have access to the Secretary of State's HAVA website which contains voter registration information. If there is a question as to whether a citizen is a registered voter or not, their information can be sought at the state's database. Polling places for the November 6 election are at Colchester High School and the basement of Our Lady of Grace Church (next to the Meeting House and the Historical Society buildings).

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

Like other departments, Colchester Police spent time this week preparing for the possible effects of Hurricane Sandy. After ensuring manpower requirements including sufficient patrol and dispatch staff, we prepared to activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the event it was needed. The Chief
For further information or comment, please call June Campbell at 264-5509.

Charles Kirker Community Room in our renovated headquarters would have acted as our local EOC with telephone and data lines for the Town's administration, Public Works Department, and Public Safety personnel to coordinate our response in the event of a large scale event. Our local EOC would have worked closely with our state and federal partners if needed to respond if our community was put in harm's way. Our thoughts are with those less fortunate along Sandy's very destructive path.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Colchester Rescue responded to 30 EMS calls, and transported 15 people to the hospital.

Colchester Technical Rescue spent 30 hours on a state deployment for Hurricane Sandy. The team spent Monday day and night in Manchester Vermont, but luckily the storm was not as bad here in Vermont, and they were only needed for standby.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The Causeway was reopened to the public on Friday, October 26th. The contractor completed the work about 2 weeks ahead of schedule. The official ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on Friday, November 2nd at noon. Special thanks to Mike Burke and Hannah Wingate with Krebs and Lansing Engineering and the workers from SD Ireland who worked through some difficult weather and challenges to complete the challenging work. The town is also very appreciative of the financial support from Local Motion and a special donor who covered the local match to the FEMA grant.

With the deadline approaching for Youth Basketball, our department is putting together the teams and coaches. Program Coordinators are busy compiling programs for the winter season. Our department had our first Winter Carnival planning meeting and have determined a theme for the 30th Anniversary. The theme will be **30 Years- Rewind**. The Winter Carnival Committee is in dire need of new members so if you are interested please contact our department at 264-5640.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

As the department winds down several construction projects underway and begins planning and engineering for next summer's projects, our maintenance operations are preparing for another winter season. The Highway Division is hauling in 3,500 tons of winter sand needed for the maintenance of over 100 miles of public and private roads maintained by the department. The Equipment Maintenance Division is preparing the department's equipment for winter including the installation of plow frames and spreader equipment. The Storm Water Division is clearing and marking 2,500 drainage structures throughout the community so that they can be quickly and easily located during the winter and spring during rain or thaw events. The Buildings Division is winterizing systems within the Town's nine buildings maintain by the department. Finally, the Wastewater Division is preparing the departments nine wastewater pumping stations for winter operation.

For further information or comment, please call June Campbell at 264-5509.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The Planning and Zoning Department would like to remind property owners that the Town has available a low-interest loan for septic work. The loan is available to owner-occupied properties and has an interest rate of 3% for up to 20 years. Loans are prioritized based upon financial need and septic need. The application and guidelines can be found on our website at www.colchestervt.gov then select our department.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

The election continues to be our focus for the next few days. If you received an absentee ballot in the mail, or carried one out of the office please be sure to return them to the office by 4 pm on Monday, November 5th. Also, if you intend to vote early you may cast a ballot up until 4 pm on Monday.

We have been busy recruiting election officials so that the polling places will be as efficient as possible. It takes many volunteers and a lot of coordination for an election to run smoothly. We are fortunate to live in a community where citizens take their civic duty very seriously. Please remember to vote, District 9-1 at Our Lady of Grace Church and District 9-2 at Colchester High School.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

The Assessor's Office is reorganizing the filing system for property records. This includes updating the Record Retentions Guidelines to conform to State recommendation, so that outdated files, correspondence, and redundant information is not taking up space. We will also be utilizing an electronic fillings system to have associated documents linked to the Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software. This will allow us to review a property's data and any information that might help in determining the property's value all in one place. These changes will create efficiencies by consolidating data and have a better use of the limited space.

There are 4 appeals to the State Appraiser scheduled in the month of November.

The Board of Civil Authority decisions have been issued. Any changes as a result of the Board's decisions have been entered into the appraisal software and new tax bills will be mailed by the Town Clerks Office in the coming weeks.

Finance – Joan Boehm (Asst. Town Manager/CFO)

Finance is busy answering questions for the auditors who are spending the week with us performing their audit.

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

The regulatory side of government is not for the "faint of heart". Most people including myself do not like to be told what to do. There is a "libertarian" in all of us. Fortunately or unfortunately, I haven't

For further information or comment, please call June Campbell at 264-5509.

figured this out yet, as a species we are unable to employ reason to find common understanding of reality, defined problems, or what is best for all of us as individuals and members of a community living on one planet. The net result is we have a “diversity” of opinions and little insight. This makes “governance” very difficult. This past week dealt with fire and waste water issues. In both instances these regulations the Town enforces are a composite of Federal and State laws plus local interests. They exist because they are “well intentioned” to protect both individuals and the surrounding community. Without a doubt every regulation has its costs – usually involving money. From a governing “point of view” – however the Town chooses to interpret these regulations, rules, law it must do so without favor to insure fairness and equal treatment. If this is not done then the Town Government loses its creditability and chaos will reign.

For further information or comment, please call June Campbell at 264-5509.