

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of November 16, 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

This has been a typical week at the library, with our usual story times, sign language, preschool music, and yoga. We also had our first Computer & Gadget Buying Guide - the second session will be next Monday (Nov. 19th). For the Thanksgiving holiday, the library will be closing at 5 pm on Wednesday, Nov. 21st; we'll be closed through Thursday and Friday (Nov. 22nd & 23rd), but will be open regularly on Saturday (Nov. 24th). Keep in mind that our December Christmas programming is just around the corner, with a tree lighting, gingerbread house contest, and week of cookies and cider.

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

Nothing to report.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

The annual ban on winter parking started Thursday, November 15th. This ordinance prohibits parking on any town roadway or parking area between the hours of 10:00 pm and 6:00 am through March 15th. Parking in violation of this ban may result in the vehicle being towed.

As we enter the holidays, please take the time to make your season as safe as possible. Valuables should not be left in vehicles and if stored there temporarily, make sure they are secured in the trunk or otherwise hidden from view. As always, vehicles and residences should be kept locked and please report any activity or circumstance that you find suspicious. Those that are traveling for the holidays may call Colchester Police to file a vacant house report that aids us in keeping a watch on vulnerable residences.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Rescue responded to 13 EMS calls this week, and transported 12 people to the hospital. Technical Rescue didn't have any calls this week.

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

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The Recreation Division has been busy putting together the Youth Basketball teams and conducting coaches training this week. Staff has also been uploading and setting up information for our ACE site directors to have on computer tablets that they will be able to use onsite. With these tablets they will be able to reduce the amount of paperwork that is need at each site as well as having information at their fingertips to receive emails from parents. Our department is excited to be able to streamline our paperwork flow for the ACE before and after school program.

Planning continues for the Colchester Winter Carnival. The Carnival Committee is in need of volunteer committee members to make the 30th Anniversary something to remember. If you are interested please contact our office at 264-5640.

The Parks Division is wrapping up its work with the Seasonal Park Staff. They are working on repairing some surfacing problems on the Causeway Connector Path from Airport Park to Mills Point Road crossing. By the end of next week all of the Seasonal Park Staff will have ended employment for us for the year. I would like to thank them all for their hard work and dedication to the parks this year. We are lucky to have them.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

Held an alternatives presentation meeting with the Select Board for intersection improvements along the Rt. 127 corridor as part of the Circ. Alternatives process.

Met with the CCMPO Executive Director and the Public Works Director from the Town of Essex to discuss pedestrian improvements along the Rt. 15 corridor as part of the Circ Alternatives process.

Met with the Champlain Water District, Town of Essex and consultants to discuss the design a new water storage tank on Water Tower Hill to support the Severance Corners Growth Center.

Finalized a Request for Proposals for engineering and design services for sidewalks along River Road, The RFP is expected to be issued this weekend.

Developing additional pedestrian projects within the Rt. 15 corridor and Fort Ethan Allen to be funded by remaining federal earmarks left over from the Campus Connector Road project.

Reviewed regulatory position by the United States Army Corp regarding the Meadow Drive ditch project. Currently waiting for position by the State Agency of Natural Resources.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

The Planning and Zoning Department warned a public hearing for Supplement 32 to the Zoning Regulations. This supplement will institute a new type of zoning, called form based code, at the Severance Corners Growth Center. It is hoped that this code encourages development that is like a traditional downtown with a mix of uses and higher residential densities. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on December 11th at 7PM at the Meeting House on these changes. The Department also continues to be busy with several instances of illegal dumping and earthwork after the

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winter shut down (October 15th). These activities are serious in nature and impair water quality. Reports of violations can be made by calling 264-5606.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

We would like to thank the Colchester property owners for their prompt tax payments. We are finishing up processing these payments. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

Nothing to report.

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

In each of the upcoming weeks, I will share with readers specific facts about the FY 14 budget.

The total General Fund Budget for FY 14 will be increasing by only about 2.28% over FY 13. This is lower than the increase in the CPI for the year ended August, 2012 over the previous year. The CPI (Consumer Price Index) increase is 3.11%. The increase equals a 1.5 cent increase in the tax rate over FY 13. For a house valued at \$300,000, the yearly increase would be about \$45.

The Town has made a significant effort to keep the increase in the budget to as low a level as possible. We have made changes to our health insurance plan that reduced the 26.6% increase in premiums for 2013 to only 2.4% by switching from a Health Saving Account plan to a Health Reimbursement Account plan and increasing deductibles. Employees continue to contribute to their deductibles and they pay a percent of the premium.

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

The Town's Administration has completed its FY 14 Budget preparation and had its departmental meeting with the Selectboard. This hearing will be on cable access TV – LCATV. The next Selectboard hearing will be on Friday, November 30, 2012. With the help of a Citizens' Advisory Committee, as we promised to use, the Town is able to recommend a budget that meets the guidelines set out by the Selectboard. This guideline allowed for a one and half cent increase to the existing tax rate. The Town achieved the Selectboard's mandate by addressing a 26.6% increase in health care costs, increased costs of supplies for fuel, insurance, and the "hole" created by this year's deficit funding of the budget. This was made possible by the cooperation and assistance provided the Town by its unionized employees – police officers, dispatchers, highway workers and paid EMT's. In coming weeks both in this column and on Front Page Forum I will provide details of how everybody employed by this Town Government contributed to saving jobs and thereby maintaining all services upon which Townspeople have come to depend.

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