

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of November 30, 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 last week of November has been a good one, with tutoring, a book discussion, yoga, and more. Next week marks the beginning of our holiday season. On Sunday, Dec. 2nd, we'll have our Annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Caroling, along with cookies and cocoa; it starts at 4 pm, with the tree lighting around 5 pm. Entries for our gingerbread house contest are due Monday and Tuesday of next week (Dec. 3rd and 4th); stop by the library or our website for guidelines and an entry form. We'll also have cookies and warm cider available at the library next week, Monday (Dec. 3rd) through Friday (Dec. 7th). There will be Holiday story times on Tuesdays (Dec. 4th, 11th, and 18th) at 10:30 pm - no sign-up necessary. Finally, the Young Adult Advisory Board is seeking new and like new books for kids and teens, for Holiday Baskets; they're collecting until Thursday (Dec. 6th).

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

This week one of the town's oldest network servers is being "retired". Programs and data are being moved to a new smaller server and to other servers on the network. These situations always cause small disruptions in workflow but can't be avoided. We try to make these changes as quick and painless as possible. It is expected that all of the changes will be completed by the end of next week. There were also helpdesk requests and lots of computer updates this week.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

Two robberies of convenience stores highlighted the activities of Colchester Police investigators this week. The robberies, approximately three miles and twelve minutes apart, were of particular concern due to the attempted use of a firearm. These two crimes are suspected to have been committed by the same individual and detectives are working with South Burlington Police on a similar event in their community the same evening. Anyone with information is asked to call Colchester Police at 264-5555.

The first winter weather event of the season kept officers busy. Several vehicles went off the road at various locations in town causing minor damage and no injuries. Motorists are urged to allow plenty of time in bad weather for delays and to keep extra distance while following fellow motorists.

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

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Colchester Rescue had 33 EMS calls over the past two weeks, and we transported 24 people to the hospital. With the first snow fall of the season on Monday, we did respond to a few motor vehicle crashes, but luckily didn't see any serious injuries.

Colchester Technical Rescue had a quiet two weeks.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The Recreation Division has been busy putting the final touches on the Winter/Spring Program Brochure which should be in mail by the end of December. Planning continues with the 30th Annual Winter Carnival. Volunteers are desperately needed for the Carnival Committee. The commitment is about 6 hours leading up to the event and then 3-4 hours on the day of the Winter Carnival. Please contact Jenn at 264-5643 if you are interested.

Youth basketball started this week with children in Grades 1-8 participating. There is limited availability in the program, so if you are interested contact Kelly at 264-5646.

The Parks Division is down to Ted Ryan. All the seasonal staff have left for the year. Fall clean up continues and the lights were put up on the tree at the Library for their Tree Lighting Ceremony on Saturday.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

The Town has been notified by the State Department of Environmental Conservation that the United States Environmental Protection Agency has finally approved the amended federal storm water permit that governs Colchester and other densely populated communities throughout the state under the Clean Water Act. Although the final permit has yet to be released for review, based upon prior drafts for public comment we expect the permit to contain conditions that place significant costs onto communities regulated under the permit. Most notably, the requirement to develop Flow Restoration Plans for impaired streams which will likely be comprised of various storm water improvements. Although these requirements will vary significantly from one community to another, it is expected that some communities within the country will be facing tens of millions of dollars in storm water improvements that will be required to be completed under the federal permit. Until the permit is released, it is premature to determine how these permit requirements will impact Colchester. We are hopeful that the proactive approach we have taken over the past 10 years in completing millions of dollars in storm water improvements, largely paid for with federal grants, will minimize the need for additional improvements. Another significant component we expect to be contained in the permit is the requirement of regulated communities to assume the cost and responsibility to monitor the flow within streams to determine compliance under the permit. As these streams are considered to be waters of the state and therefore the responsibility of the state, there are concerns that these responsibilities and costs may be shifted to regulated communities who will be required to accept these responsibilities as a condition of their federal permit.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

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The Department of Planning & Zoning has received an application for subdivision of the Camp Holy Cross property. This application is a sketch plan which is the first of three applications needed for a major subdivision. It will be heard on January 9, 2013 at 7PM at the Colchester Meeting House by the Development Review Board. The application can be viewed on-line at www.colchestervt.gov by clicking on agendas and then the meeting date. A 19-unit residential development off of Fox Run (Rivers Edge / Whitten) is also scheduled for its final plat application to be heard at this meeting (final of the three applications). All DRB and Planning Commission meetings are online and all pending board applications can be reviewed there.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

The Clerk's office is very busy "catching up" after a hectic few weeks with elections and taxes. It seems that interest rates are again at a record low, and as a result many citizens are taking this opportunity to refinance their mortgage. The good news is that our revenues for recording documents are increasing.

The issuing of passports has also been increasing. If you are planning a trip out of the country in the future, please remember that we are a Passport Acceptance Agency, and can also do the passport photos in the office.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

Nothing to report.

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

Fund Balance - The Town of Colchester's primary operating fund is the General Fund. This fund has a Fund Balance which is calculated by subtracting liabilities from the assets of this fund. A positive fund balance means there are more assets than liabilities; a negative fund balance means just the opposite.

For 6 years, between FY 89 and FY 94, the Town had negative Fund Balances.

As of June 30, 2012, the General Fund had a fund balance of approximately \$1.37 million. This is about 13% of a year's operating expenses. It falls within the prudent range of maintaining between 5 to 15% of operating expenditures in reserve for unexpected major issues or catastrophes. Another school of thought believes that a government should maintain at least 2 months operating expenses in reserve. The Town of Colchester has about 1.5 months in reserve and therefore falls short of this philosophy. We believe a balance between the two philosophes is necessary.

Management and the Select Board are working hard to maintain a healthy Fund Balance while taking advantage of the balance in this account to help keep tax rates down.

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

Although we all love and support "local control" a town does not exist in isolation. It must work in cooperation with neighboring towns and cities as part of a State and Nation. Concurrently for the town to work successfully with its neighbors, State and the Feds the Town's elected and appointed officials

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need to network with their colleagues from other towns along with State and Federal personnel. Last night's meeting of the Governor's Circumferential Highway Alternatives Committee, composed of municipal from Colchester, Essex, Williston and Essex Junction along with the Regional Planning Commission and State officials, met to finalize the Committee's recommendation to the Governor and Legislature to use of the second round of Circ. Highway moneys for projects to address traffic problems caused by the demise of the Circ.

Marc Landry, a member of the Town's delegation along with Bryan Osborne and the Town Manager, reported the following to the Selectboard which I am sharing with you: On Thursday night, November 29th, at the Circumferential Highway Alternatives meeting in Williston "...\$13,900,000 of transportation projects within the county were voted to be sent forward to VTrans and the Legislature to be included in the 2014 Budget. Of that amount, almost \$8,000,000 is for projects in Colchester - with Essex, Williston, Essex Jct., and CCTA sharing the balance.

Our 2 projects are the road and pedestrian improvements at the Growth Center to the tune of \$6,000,000; as you may remember this was the subject of our TIF District and was not going anywhere very fast. The second project is a 10 foot multiuse recreation path from the Winooski line and Exit 15, following Rt. 15 on the right side of the road to Fanny Allen and crossing at the entrance to Camp Johnson, continuing on the left side of Rt. 15 across the front of the Fort to Susie Wilson. There are 2 other phases to come, in Essex; but ours got the go ahead for this year.

A lot of what occurs at these meetings is the result of preparation, knowing the system and how it works, being involved regionally, known and respected by those who are in a position to assist the town. I doubt if Colchester could have been any better prepared."