

Colchester's Weekly Town News

For the Week of September 7, 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

Things have been relatively quiet during this short week at the library, with the DCF Book Discussion and the Farmers' Market as the main items of note. Next week, however, marks the return of our Saturday hours, from 9 am-3 pm. Our various story times also start up again - Preschoolers on Mondays and Thursdays (10:30 am), Toddlers on Tuesdays (10:30 am), and Saturday Drop-In (10 am). In terms of other upcoming events, we have a two-part Practice SAT Exam (9/22 & 9/29), a perennial plant swap (9/15), and a Book Discussion and Talk on Vermont in the Civil War (9/25 - stop by for the books).

IT – Alice Greig – Technology Department

Time was spent reconfiguring rack equipment in the server room, recovering data from a corrupted database and a few help desk tasks.

Police Department –Chuck Kirker, Police Chief

The Labor Day weekend was a busy one for Colchester Police. Cpl. Cannon, manning our marine unit, answered a number of boating related issues in and around Malletts Bay from boaters in distress to boating violations. St Michael’s College students completed their first week of classes and officers dealt with numerous alcohol violations and took several students into protective custody who were incapacitated from alcohol.

Just after midnight on Monday morning, officers seized a vehicle parked on Edgewood Drive after a report of suspicious persons in the area. The vehicle had a number of stolen items visible from the outside. A search warrant was executed on the vehicle and criminal charges are pending. Later on Labor Day evening, a male was detained by an off duty law enforcement officer in a neighborhood off of Porters Point Road after he was seen going through vehicles. Investigation revealed a stolen vehicle from Williston in the same area. Colchester and Williston Police are continuing to investigate. We again urge everyone to keep their vehicles and residences locked and report any suspicious activity.

Rescue & Technical Rescue Squads - Amy Akerlind, Rescue Chief

Colchester Rescue responded to 31 calls, and turned over 3. Out of the 31 responses, we transported 27 patients to the hospital.

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

Colchester Technical Rescue responded to Niquette Bay State Park for a cliff diver who was possibly injured. Upon arrival it was determined that there was no one injured, and everyone was cancelled.

On August 30th, the Team, along with many of its supporters, held a dedication luncheon for their new building. After the ceremony, a plaque was unveiled naming all of the people who donated to make the building possible. The plaque is mounted on the outside of the building for everyone to see.

Parks and Recreation – Glen Cuttitta, Director

The Parks and Recreation office has been busy this week putting together the final details for the Muck it Up Adventure Race. The course has been GPS'd and mapped. Our Program Coordinators spent a day being trained to teach a Babysitting course. The ACE before and afterschool program is in its second week and our staff is doing a fantastic job working with all the participants at Union Memorial, Porters Point and Malletts Bay School.

Ted Ryan and his staff have been landscaping the newly renovated Police Department and cleaning up the landscaping at other municipal buildings around town.

The Fall Program Guide has been out in the public for almost three weeks so if you have not received it yet then contact our office and we will send you one. There are many great new programs starting in the next few weeks so be sure to check it out! We are still looking for 10 volunteers for the Muck it Up event so if you are interested please call 264-5640.

Public Works – Bryan Osborne, Director

A grant application for a Park & Ride Facility on Heineberg Drive has been completed and submitted to the Vermont Agency of Transportation for review and consideration. There are no local match funds required for this grant program unless the actual project costs exceed the grant award.

A draft Scoping Study has been completed for the reconstruction of the Blakely Road/Laker Lane intersection. A re-alignment of the intersection is intended to address the congestion created during the beginning and ending of the school day or other school functions. This project is included within the Circ. Alternatives initiative which relies upon 100% federal funding.

Consulted with the U.S. Army Corps Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory to explore possible solutions to prevent future ice damage to a storm water outfall damaged from the ice flows this past spring.

Planning & Zoning - Sarah Hadd, Director

On September 24th revised fees will take effect for the Department of Planning and Zoning. The new fees can be found on the Town's website under "New Ordinances" as Chapter 6 ½. The new fees will hopefully be easier to understand and more transparent in what services the fees are covering as they have been more directly related to staff time spent in processing permits. The goal is to make the department more self-sustaining based upon fees for services and less dependent on tax dollars. While

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

some fees have gone up because of this goal, it should be noted that the annual temporary sign permit will be reduced from \$150 to \$50 to better assist business owners in their advertising needs. While fees were waived by the Select Board for temporary signs during the summer during this transition, the new fee will be in effect on September 24th so businesses are encouraged to apply for their free permit now. All permits applied for or issued after September 24th will be subject to the new fees.

Clerk's Office – Karen Richard, Town Clerk

The Clerk's office has contracted with Official Payments Corp and is now able to accept credit cards. It is a fee based system. The fee is 2.6%, so a \$1000 tax payment would result in a fee of \$26.00. The fee is paid to the credit card company. Please call if you have any questions re: acceptance of credit cards.

Election notes: Results of the August 28th election are available on our website. There were 1292 votes cast, including 1142 Democratic ballots, 151 Republican, and 1 Progressive. Of the 1292, there were 224 voters that chose to cast their ballot early, either by voting in the office or having their ballot mailed to them. I want to apologize to the voters that were inconvenienced by the change in the polling location for District 9-2. Due to a conflict at the High School the election was moved to Malletts Bay School. A special thanks to the staff at Malletts Bay School for being so accommodating.

Assessor – Bob Vickery, Assessor

The Board of Civil Authority (BCA) has heard most of the appeals for 2012 Grand List (GL), The BCA will be finishing up the hearings this month, and will be inspecting the properties over the next month. As soon as we receive the decisions from the BCA we will be entering into the Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software the information from the BCA. When all the decisions are entered we will be able to finalize the GL and start entering data for the 2013 Grand List.

There are 5 appeals from the 2011 reappraisal that are scheduled for hearings with the State Appraiser in the months of September and October; we will be working on the preparation for these appeals, this week.

This time of year is when Towns and the State review the sales that have occurred over the last 3 years in the respective Towns. This process will establish which sales are used in the study that calculates the Common Level of Assessment (CLA). The CLA is very important because it will be a factor in determining the Town's Education Tax Rate, the lower the CLA the higher the tax rate. A hand full of sales with unusual circumstances can have an effect on the CLA which in turn can affect the tax rate. It is important that only "arm's length" sales are included in the study to ensure that the most accurate CLA possible is used when the tax rate is calculated.

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

The budget process is underway for FY 14. All departmental budgets are due by Sept 7. Then the process of compiling the General Fund budget begins. We will present a preliminary budget to the Select Board at the end of October and the departments will meet with the Select Board to discuss their budgets in November. Adjustments will be made to the preliminary budget as a result of all these meetings and a refined budget will be presented to the citizens at a Select Board meeting in December. The Select Board must accept a budget by January 24, 2013 for voting by the Town on March 5, 2013.

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

Town Manager's Office – Al Voegele, Town Manager

I've read the responses to the citizen survey the Town recently sent out. Quite frankly I was surprised by the amount of misinformation believed by the respondents – 65% of whom are over the age 50. Let me set the record straight: (1) teachers and other educational costs are not controlled by the municipal government; (2) the Town's tax rate at 55¢ is less than Essex Junction, Burlington and Winooski; (3) Colchester's municipal tax and equalized homestead education tax combination rate at \$1.7818 is less than Essex Town, Burlington, Essex Junction and Winooski; (4) water service and bills are provided by three different Fire Districts – not the Town of Colchester; and (5) the Town has no pension obligations to its retired employees nor does it have any health care obligations to its retired employees. In spite of these misperceptions, 67% who responded to the survey are somewhat to very satisfied with the quality of services provided by the Town.

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