

Colchester's Weekly Town News
For the Week of September 15, 2014

While 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

The Town of Colchester is pleased to announce that two of our department heads have been recognized by their peers for their professionalism and abilities in their respective areas of expertise.

Karen Richard, our Town Clerk and Treasurer received the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers award for Vermont's Treasurer of the Year. Sarah Hadd, our Planning and Zoning Director was recognized by the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire) as Planner of the Year. This follows on the heels of being recognized by the Vermont Planner of the Year earlier this summer.

We are fortunate to have these individuals who are held in high regard by their colleagues working for our community. Congratulations, Sarah and Karen!

Neighbor Rides: Drive to Make a Difference!

Neighbor Rides is seeking volunteer drivers to use their personal vehicles to help seniors and people with disabilities get to medical appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies and other destinations. Volunteer drivers have the chance to make a tangible impact on the lives of their neighbors by helping them get to life-sustaining and enriching activities. Flexible schedules and mileage reimbursement are available; background checks required.

If you are interested in volunteering, please e-mail alyson@unitedwaycc.org; call (802) 861-7833; or visit our website <http://www.unitedwaycc.org/volunteer/neighbor-rides-2/>

For more information about the Town Manager's Office, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Manager/index.shtml> or call (802) 264-5509.

Assessor's Office—Bob Vickery, Assessor

The Assessor's Office has been working on efficiencies with other departments to better serve the Town's residents.

- The Building Inspector and the Town Assessor are working on combining appointments for inspections. This will reduce the number of visits to a property and be more efficient for both the property owner and the Town.

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.

- We have been working on efforts to cross-train with the Clerk's Office and the Planning and Zoning Department to enhance customer service.
- We have been helping the Planning and Zoning Department with their efforts to create protocols to import and export data between the departments' unique software. This will reduce the time spent on data entry for both departments.

For more information about the Assessor's Department, please visit <http://colchestervt.gov/Assessor/assessorHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5670.

Town Clerk's Office—Karen Richard, Town Clerk

- For those taxpayers that filed their homesteads after April 15th we have just received the download from the Tax Department and are in the process of revising 99 tax bills. The revisions should be complete and the revised bills should be in mail early next week, in plenty of time for the November installment.
- Attended the Annual Meeting of the Vermont Municipal Clerks' and Treasurers' Association held on September 15th and 16th. The training sessions included the topics of cemeteries, retention schedules for documents in the custody of the clerk's office, election procedures, changes in the Abatement process and safety and security in the workplace.
- Attended the public hearing for the charter changes being proposed on the November ballot.

One article is the change of the Town Clerk/Treasurer position from an elected to appointed Town Clerk and Town Treasurer. Since 1998 when I was first elected, the office has transitioned from a manual paper process to an electronic process. In the past we billed and collected taxes. We are now sending electronic files to escrow companies and debiting taxpayer accounts for taxes that are due. We scan and electronically file all land records and maps that are received. It is time for the position to require professional experience and qualifications. The office should have oversight and be held to the same standards as other departments.

The other change I have advocated for is the reduction in the penalty rate for delinquent taxes. So many people are caught with a onetime dilemma of being late. The 8% penalty is harsh for being late one time. The charter change will reduce the penalty to 5% for the first 30 days and then the additional 3% will be applied if the installment is still delinquent.

The list of charter changes is available in the Clerk's office for your convenience. Please attend the public hearing on the charter changes that is being held on September 23rd in the Pomerleau Conference Room at St. Michael's College or an informational meeting on October 28th at the regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting, or email me or the Selectboard with your input.

For more information about the Town Clerk's Office, <http://colchestervt.gov/TownClerk/townClerkHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5520

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.

Finance Department—Aaron Frank, Assistant Town Manager/CFO

Recent activities included:

- Worked with Colchester Police and Town of Milton to increase the fees for our dispatch service by \$26,000 annually beginning in FY 16.
- Completed a ten year plan for Town information technology equipment and contributed to a Town-wide capital plan for public consideration.
- With other Town staff, briefed two visitors from Tibet, China who were studying local government in the United States and in particular, rural development and public / private partnerships.
- Finalizing preparation of documents and financial information for the FY 14 Audit. The Town of Colchester receives an annual outside audit with auditors reporting directly to the Selectboard.

For more information about the Finance Department, please visit

<http://colchestervt.gov/Finance/financeHome.shtml> or call (802) 264-5650.

For further information or comment, please call Linda Kingston at 264-5509.