



**For the Week Ending January 1, 2016**

**Town Manager's Special Edition**  
**Dawn H. Francis, Town Manager**

**The following was a year-end message from Dawn Francis to the Town of Colchester employees:**

2015 is coming to a close and the Selectboard and I extend our appreciation to all of you for helping us provide high quality services while containing costs, which resulted in a lower tax bill for our taxpayers. Thanks to a team effort, we are making progress on a number of long standing community priorities. Our Selectboard's annual report includes the following message:

We would like to extend our sincere and utmost appreciation to the members of all of our numerous volunteer boards, commissions and to our volunteer fire, rescue and technical rescue emergency responders. You all make the Town shine and we could not do what we do without your assistance and tireless dedication to the safety and betterment of this community. We would also like to thank our extremely talented Town staff that show us each day how fortunate we are to live in this wonderful and caring community.

The following is a highlight of some of our accomplishments during 2015 and a look ahead.

**Budget and Finances**

The proposed FY 17 budget maintains the same level of services, but recognizes that we have needs for more public safety dispatch and police coverage given the increase in crime as well as additional administrative needs for our volunteer fire departments. We are also challenged by state mandated increases in the areas of stormwater and worker's compensation coverage. Eight of the twenty-six program areas were reduced and one level funded in our budget proposal due to everyone's hard work in cost containment. The General Fund operating budget is proposed to increase by 2.4%, but the anticipated tax rate continues a declining trend of 1.3%. Thanks to everyone's efforts, we have another clean audit and have substantially completed a fixed asset inventory which accounts for almost every piece of equipment we own. We have also updated some critical financial policies and our capital budget/program for the next 5 years.

**Organizational**



- More training opportunities and emphasis on keeping employees safe and well through VLCT on-line training, wellness activities and various workshops, professional development and events.
- Focus on training and developing employees for succession planning.
- Finished a complete inventory of police evidence, updated policies and procedures and instituted performance reviews in the Police Department.
- Established a Rescue Advisory committee and authorization of an Assistant Chief position to improve communications and recruitment of volunteers.
- Updated Local Emergency Operations Plan and our emergency preparedness.
- A new Cemetery Advisory Committee has brought renewed focus to our cemeteries and staff is updating records and mapping.
- Governance Committee has recommended more Charter changes to modernize our government.
- Firearms ordinance was updated with resident participation.
- Town's new website was launched and showcased our new logo, branding campaign and videos; a mobile app, ads and resident/visitor guide were developed.
- CPOA and AFSCME union collective bargaining agreements were signed.
- Significant progress made by Clerk/Assessor/Planning and Zoning offices to make permits and other records available to the public on-line. We lead the State in terms of on-line accessibility of records used most often by the public.

## **Buildings/Facilities/Infrastructure**

- Major projects such as Mill Pond Road and Colchester Pond bridge reconstruction; new sewer, water, and stormwater systems in Windemere Mobile Home Park; re-paving of several roads; Smith Estates drainage improvements; a water tank upgrade by CWD assisted by our staff; facilities needs assessment and energy audit, and building repairs to the Library and the Town Meeting Hall were completed.
- Airport Park Maintenance Building replacement is underway.
- To meet State Growth Center requirements new development at Severance Corners and a Visitor Information Center with no significant cost to taxpayers.
- Various departments received over \$900,000 in grants.
- Continued work on radio towers and systems to improve reception.

## **Services**

- CCTA transit service from Burlington to Milton continues to attract riders.
- Expanded Library programs and public outreach and facility improvements made.
- Recreation programs were expanded; after school/summer program participation increased; paddle sport rentals at Bayside Park were introduced.
- Achieved State delegation authority from the Agency of Natural Resources to administer and enforce the Town's shoreland regulations.



## **Future Priorities**

During 2016, we will continue our focus on employee safety and wellness, staff development, policy updates, community outreach and emergency preparedness. At the same time, we will be working on:

- Clean Water Initiative - Sewers/Stormsewers, new Stormwater Utility, Low Impact/Green Development standards, changes in Wastewater Standards and Land Use to improve water quality in Malletts Bay.
- Development of a master plan and vision for the Bayside Park, Bayside Hazelett area and a needs assessment/feasibility analysis relating to a Community Center.
- Address Capital Facilities Needs such as space for expanded Library programs, Airport Park maintenance building and Town office 3rd floor meeting space.
- Emergency service needs including staffing, training, and coordination with other agencies.
- Improved communications/social media with all Town residents.
- Adoption of more Charter changes including revisiting the elected/appointed Town Clerk.
- Exit 16 redevelopment/improvements plan in anticipation of new intersection.
- Crime prevention, traffic safety, opiate and drug addiction issues.
- Strategic plan for Burnham Library.

Thank you for your continued dedication, hard work and support of our community and making it the 40th best place to live in America (according to money.com). Happy Holidays to all!

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