

For the Week of January 22, 2018

Manager's Message of the Week Dawn Francis, Town Manager

With the first stormwater utility billing, (assessed once a year) we are receiving questions about our stormwater department and the services it provides. Here is some information that may be helpful:

I don't understand *why* stormwater is such a big deal.

- With every rainfall, pollutants on paved ground are carried by runoff to stormwater drains, culverts or ditches and ultimately to Lake Champlain. Pesticides, fertilizers, and animal waste contribute significantly to lake pollution. A polluted lake negatively impacts drinking water, property values, the economy and tourism industry, and human and animal health.
- The Town owns and operates a stormwater system that is regulated by the federal government. The stormwater department maintains this system, which is a series of culverts, catch basins (the grates in the roadway that collect water), underground pipelines, and treatment structures, and performs upgrades to comply with water quality requirements. Not every property that uses this system pays property taxes, which was how the department was funded prior to adopting a utility.

But why a Stormwater Utility (and Stormwater Billing) now? Couldn't it wait?

- The State of Vermont has mandated the cleanup of Lake Champlain but has left a large portion of the funding for it up to the municipalities. The most equitable way to pay for lake cleanup is to bill through a Stormwater utility, rather than property taxes, because some properties that use the system are property-tax exempt. Under the utility, every property is sent a stormwater invoice, so every property contributes to the upkeep of this system.

So how does the Stormwater billing work in Colchester?

- Every single-family, duplex, triplex, vacant, or undeveloped property in Colchester is being charged the same flat fee: \$52.39 – the minimum charge for stormwater. Municipal property tax rates were reduced to help offset the new stormwater bill. While your overall tax bill, which consists of a bill for both Town and School services, may have increased, the municipal tax rate (not the education rate) decreased in this tax year. Commercial, large residential, educational, and institutional properties are charged based on the amount of pavement, parking areas, and buildings on the property. Credits for stormwater management practices may be available (large residential and commercial developments only).
- The fee is annual and will be billed in January each year.

How will the funds be used?

- The funds will be used to comply with state and federal regulations and support the management of 53 stormwater ponds, 2,282 pipelines, and 279 outfalls where pipes discharge water into streams and rivers. It will also support street sweeping and water quality testing at sites around the community. These are all managed under a federal permit, with a total department budget of \$849,737.

If you have further questions or more details about any of the above you may contact Karen Adams, Technical Services Manager, at 264-5621 or by email at kadams@colchestervt.gov. Or visit www.colchestervt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=275

Office of the Town Clerk Karen Richard

Town Clerk Report

May the New Year bring you health and happiness! We are fortunate to live in a Town with so many opportunities to stay busy. Please consider serving your Town in an elected capacity. The election is March 6.

The following positions will be on the ballot:

Selectboard, 2 Year | Selectboard, 3 Year | School Board, 2 Year | School Board, 3 Year | Library Trustee, 5 Year | Lister, 3 Year | Moderator, 1 Year | Champlain Water District Representative, 3 Years

To run for any of the positions listed above submit a petition stating the office you wish to run for, the length of the term, and the signatures of 30 registered voters. We cannot accept petitions without the term of office. If you have questions or would like blank petitions please contact us. The deadline to submit a petition is 5:00 PM on Monday, January 25, 2018.

There is a proposed Charter amendment on the March ballot to change the Town Clerk/Treasurer position from elected to appointed. This was initiated by the Governance Committee as they reviewed the Charter.

Over my 30 years with the Town (20 as Town Clerk) the position has evolved with technology. All the systems have been automated, from elections to banking, as well as filing land records and vital records. Extensive training is needed to run elections. Knowledge of ever-changing statutes is critical. Elected Clerks/Treasurers are not required to attend the training, leaving some towns vulnerable to liability.

For further information or comment, please call Linda Gustainis at 802.264.5509

During the mid-1980s the Town voted to hire a professional Assessor. Before then, three elected Listers were responsible for the grand list. They collected the data on all new construction and permits for home improvements. The Town had the foresight to recognize the position required education and experience in all aspects of valuing property. It is time to give the same consideration to the Town Clerk/Treasurer position.

Do we elect a police chief? No, we hire the most qualified person. Perhaps it is time for us to do the same for the Town Clerk.

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

Upcoming Town Meetings:

- **Planning Commission:** Tuesday, February 6, 7:00 PM
 - **Selectboard:** Tuesday, February 13, 6:30 PM
 - **Recreation Advisory Board:** Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 AM (Champlain Room at the Town Offices, 2nd floor)
 - **Development Review Board:** Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 PM
- (All meetings take place at the Colchester Town Offices, 781 Blakely Road, in the Outer Bay Conference Room on the 3rd floor unless otherwise noted.)

Upcoming Events:

- **Winter Carnival is February 2-4 at Colchester High School. Come enjoy fun for the whole family! Winter Carnival bracelets are \$7. Children 2 and under FREE! You may purchase bracelets at:**
 - **Biben's ACE Hardware**
 - **Burnham Memorial Library**
 - **Colchester Parks & Recreation in the Town Offices**
 - **Mazza's General Store**

Notices:

- The traffic signal at the Bay Road/Route 7/2 & 127 intersection will be installed on Monday, January 22 and Tuesday, January 23. It is expected to be fully operational by Tuesday afternoon. At times a bucket truck will be located in the intersection to adjust the cameras, with intermittent one-way traffic during signal installation. Work is weather-dependent and won't occur if roads are slippery or visibility is poor. Should that happen, the signals will be put in as soon as the weather clears.

 **Remember to follow us on Facebook (@TownColchesterVT) to get the latest about what's happening in your community!**

For further information or comment, please call Linda Gustainis at 802.264.5509



Colchester Town News
VERMONT

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