
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TO: SELECTBOARD
FROM: PETE WEBSTER, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT
DATE: JANUARY 7, 2010

It has been a good holiday break for us all, an extended period of fewer meetings. Our last regular Selectboard meeting was on Dec. 16th (with a special meeting on the 21st), and we are nearing the end of a productive budget season. I trust you all had as enjoyable a holiday break as my family and I had.

Solar Project

There have been numerous meetings of the Norwich Energy Committee (NEC) over the past 4 weeks and a couple of Norwich Finance Committee (NFC) meetings. We had a successful bid opening (seven very interested solar manufacturers were present, and all very encouraging about this project). The NEC has been crunching those numbers, with numerous spreadsheets generated as more detailed information was obtained, including a meeting with Paul Giuliani. Paul is the bond counsel for the Vt. Municipal Bond Bank. Mr. Giuliani came down to explain the bonding process, as we have received an allocation for up to \$1.37 million in CREB (Clean Renewable Energy Bonds) from the IRS. It was great that Sharon was able to join us at this meeting and get more direct information on the specifics. The NEC also received the good news that their CEDF grant had been increased from \$150,000 to \$220,000, which makes this project somewhat more feasible. You will be hearing more directly from the NEC, who have decided that this project is just too big and too complicated to try and educate the Selectboard and the voters in time to get it approved for the Town Meeting Warning. They have agreed not to get locked into too short a time frame, but hopefully get the Selectboard's support at some point and have a special Town Meeting later in April, giving everyone more time to learn about this proposal and discuss the merits. The NEC members hope to make a presentation to the NFC this coming week, to inform and persuade them that this project continues to make sound fiscal sense for the taxpayers.

Norwich Night

The first ever Norwich Night, a revival of something I'm told used to happen above Dan & Whit's, was a resounding success on every level. Despite some initial skepticism from some, including me, this event, just seven days before Christmas, was a 'sell out'—standing room only around the gym, more dishes/casseroles/desserts than the tables could accommodate, followed by two hours of some very entertaining skits. Best guess is that some 250 residents braved 5 degree weather to come out and enjoy themselves. This was exactly what the

doctor ordered for Norwich, and a tip of my hat to all involved, especially Norm Miller who gave birth to the idea. Suzanne Lupien also deserves special recognition for her early buy-in and her efforts to make it the success it was. It was great to see almost the entire Board there, with most of you actually being involved in the skits.

Union Village Road

Andy and I drove this road several times after your last meeting, then again with Jim Gold to get his input, looking for signage that could conceivably be eliminated without decreasing safety. Just this past week Andy and I drove the road with two representatives from VTtrans, Josh Schultz and Kevin Marshia, and got their thoughts. We are working towards a mutual agreement that will accomplish all of our goals, with certain signage being removed when the thaw comes in March/April. We also discussed the opportunity for the Town to take over the 2.3 mile section of road as a Class 1 Town road, mileage that is currently State highway. That legislation will be introduced in this session by Rep. Margaret Cheney in the Transportation bill, per your instructions on Nov. 24th. According to Mr. Marshia, there is still willingness on the part of the State for this transfer to happen.

Union Contract Negotiations

Not much can be reported out of Executive Session. We have had five sessions thus far, with both Andy Hodgdon and Doug Robinson assisting me in dealing with the AFSCME negotiator, George Lovell. The current contract expires June 30. I would welcome any Selectboard member who has time and wants to be involved in the final sessions to join us in these discussions. The next meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 12th at 3:30 pm and Tuesday, Feb. 2nd at 3:30.

Other Issues

The Recreation Department's newly lighted rink on the Green has been extremely well received. We've had great skating weather over the holidays.

The Highway Department has been kept busy due to a series of smaller storms, but our supplies are holding up. Roberta has distributed to you the six month financials, and we appear to be in good shape with our budgets.

Doug Robinson held a buffet lunch for his entire department to honor Officer Chuck Rataj before he left for his National Guard tour in Afghanistan. Both of Chuck's parents were in attendance, and it was a wonderful gesture on Doug's part to organize the luncheon ceremony. We all wish Chuck a safe tour of duty and look forward to his safe return before the end of the calendar year.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Webster,
Town Manager