
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TO: NORWICH SELECTBOARD
FROM: PETE WEBSTER, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT
DATE: 3/5/2010

Last week was a busy one—many meetings and preparations with the Recreation Council for the celebration to honor our latest Gold medal winner from Vancouver, Hannah Kearney, daughter of our long time Recreation Director. In a nutshell, Hannah will be returning Tuesday the 23rd or Thursday the 25th. I am working on a proclamation for your Board's signature. There will be a motorcade parade starting over at Hanover High School on Friday, Feb. 26th, starting around 1 pm, and from 2 to 3 pm there will be various dignitaries on the green, at the bandstand. I'm told the schools will let the kids out early for the event, which should be over in time for them to head off to the Skiway. The Recreation Council feels this celebration should be aimed primarily at the kids, rather than an evening event (which was also debated) for the adults. The Norwich Women's Club is helping with some of the expenses, such as hundreds of small American flags to be handed out, a nice plaque with the key to the Town for her presentation, etc etc. We will have the American flags adorning the utility poles on the way into town. I have a call into Governor Douglas' office to see if his calendar is open, and of course Margaret Cheney, Jim Masland, and Peter Welch will be invited as well. Later that evening over in the Hanover Inn will be a reception sponsored by her equipment manufacturers (Volk, Technica and Marker) from 7 to 9 in the Daniel Webster Room, preceded by a poster signing session from 5:30-6:30.

I met with Department Heads to discuss a number of Town issues, including an early discussion of just what we might be able to accomplish in the FY 12 budget and some of the new provisions of the recently ratified three year union agreement. My concern is that we can cut only so much, and this coming year's budget has been one of cuts, without reduction in services. Over the next several months I will be conducting a wage survey (possibly in conjunction with the Town of Hartford, who has not done this in over five years, which should save on the expense). I don't want our employees to begin feeling unappreciated and underpaid compared to other municipalities. They are our strongest resource.

I've met with Lucy Gibson and Phil Dechert to go over the latest plans for the Safe Routes to School sidewalk project—I have every intention of this being completed this construction season, and there are a number of public hearings (for certain trees to be removed or relocated) and meetings with the neighborhood that need to occur. If and when the Town takes over that state road (Church Street) as a Town Class 1 road, planning would be made somewhat easier for this sidewalk installation. There may be another opportunity for applying for a second Safe Routes grant, and the Transportation Committee will be pursuing that possibility.

I've met with the Norwich Finance Committee (twice) and the Norwich Energy Committee, as they explained the details of the solar project to the Finance Committee members. There will be additional presentations to be sure, and adequate time for your Board to pursue this complicated yet exciting project in thorough detail, before it ever goes any further to a possible Town vote.

I worked on the final preparations for getting our annual Town Report out in the mail two days ago—the report looks very good, much more colorful than last year’s, and I think a real tribute to all the hard work from a great number of contributors.

I spent a full day last week at the monthly meeting of Leadership Upper Valley, this held at Hypertherm’s facility. As you know, both Chief Robinson and our Treasurer, Cheryl Lindberg are also taking part in this course. This session was devoted to the Upper Valley’s economic development, and all issues pertaining to same; i.e. gaining an overview of the economy here in the UV, and understanding the interplay of the economy with public institutions and social systems in the community and region. I have to say I have thoroughly enjoyed the first five sessions of this program sponsored by Vital Communities, and would recommend this to others.

Speaking of Vital Communities, I attended an evening workshop sponsored by that organization, in White River Junction. This seminar was primarily directed towards NH municipalities in response to new work-force housing regulations recently passed in the Granite State. However, this was an illuminating session on affordable housing for Vermont municipalities as well. Also at that meeting were the Chair of the Planning Commission, Daniel Johnson, Ann Silverfarb, Brook Adler and Richard Stucker. We might, some day, want to consider establishing a Housing Commission to work on these complicated issues, but that would be an initiative coming from Planning.

This will now be a continuation of the preceding report as the Selectboard did not meet last week, and we have a new member on Board in Uwe. I’ve been involved with continuing preparatory meetings with the Recreation Council to refine the plans for last Friday’s Hannah celebration, and was then involved with the actual celebration. I presented a proclamation and key-to-the-town plaque to Hannah on behalf of the Town, then hosted Gov. Douglas in Tracy Hall for about 45 minutes after the ceremony over a cup of hot coffee and discussed Town/state issues with him. This event clearly put Norwich in a very positive light, both locally, regionally, and even in the NY Times. The volunteers from the Recreation Council, especially Chris Healy and Lars Blackmore, not to overlook Phil Dechert’s great involvement, did an outstanding job of pulling together this event, without much cooperation from the weather.

I attended the closing on the Cooper property, a sliver of Town-owned land that was finally (this issues goes back about 4 years) sold to the Coopers, also involving the Upper Valley Land Trust. Another UVLT property, involving an easement to them from the Town, is the 5 acre Melendy property (at the intersection of River Road and Rt. 5). I walked that property this week with Amber Boland from the UVLT—they like to visit each of their properties at least annually to ensure that no inappropriate activities may be occurring on the land. This Town-owned property is currently in use by Kildeer Farm, as they planted corn and pumpkins there this past year.

I met with Terry Boone to prepare for Town Meeting, going over the various articles and discussing his views on the moderator’s role. I later helped out at the polls after polling hours, helping our Town Clerk with the ballot counting and dismantling of the polling stations.

I reviewed with Roberta the bids for the next three-year audit period. We will be sharing those with you and making a recommendation for your final approval.

A radar speed monitoring device (the style of machine that flashes your current speed as you approach it) has been acquired by Doug Robinson through a grant, and will be permanently mounted on a utility pole about 150 feet north of Four Wheel Drive on Church Street. So, as one approaches

town from River Road, heading south on Rt. 5, you will see your speed approaching the school zone. This should help immensely with traffic control in that key area.

I was involved with Town Eating Day, sitting in on the plenary session and both the Planning discussion and the Energy Committee break out session.

I had my monthly session with Bob Franzoni and a CATV interview on Town issues.

I attended the TRORC TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) meeting, with Phil Dechert, to review the latest TAC priority list. Norwich has no projects currently on this priority list.

I met with Uwe on two occasions to go over various Town issues and help familiarize him with those issues. I've spoken with our new Chair on ways we can communicate effectively on upcoming agendas, whether it be by physically meeting once or twice a week, by telephone or by email. I look forward to a great working relationship with him, and helping him in any way I can so he can better carry out the duties of that chairmanship.

We will be receiving the Quint this week, the unit that was previously approved by the Selectboard. Steve Leinoff feels he has a buyer for our 1979 aerial truck, which is being replaced by this acquisition. There is not much of a market for a 30+ year old aerial.

I attended a monthly Town Managers' luncheon in Ludlow. As I've stated in the past, these informal get-togethers are helpful in that we all share and learn from each other's experiences.

Sincerely,

Pete Webster