



Peter B. Webster  
Town Manager

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Selectmen

**FROM:** Peter B. Webster, Town Manager

**DATE:** Feb. 7, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Information for the Selectboard

### Winter of 2010/2011—Public Works Department Update

As you may have noticed, we've been pummeled by a series of significant winter storms, which is affecting our winter supplies of sand/salt and overtime budget. At this point, we are still in relatively good shape, although the Town crew could use a break from the overtime hours they've been accruing. Our sand supplies continue strong—we still have sand left over from FY10, leaving \$57,523 in this current budget that is unexpended. We have budgeted \$111,300 for salt in FY11, and have used, to date, just under \$50,000 or about 43% expended. As of January 1, we have used up 16.7% of the overtime budget. I realize we can't have every mile of the 100 miles of roads we maintain cleared to everyone's satisfaction, at any given time during or immediately after a storm. The crew does its best, still a man down, to provide the highest level of service possible, anticipating the next round of snow and clearing out the downtown areas so we have room to push the next dump. We've had a few complaints, but these are outweighed by the positive comments that have come in. The sidewalks are in remarkably good shape within hours of the end of a storm. We are using Clear Lane <http://www.cargill.com/products/salt/winter/clearlane/index.jsp> on the sidewalks after the sidewalk snowblower has done most of the removal, which is a more eco-friendly material. We are having continuing discussions, however, about how to blow the snow from walks so that it does not damage vegetation for abutting property owners, and that is a difficult issue. We could blow it out into the road, where it would just get plowed back onto the sidewalks, or blow it away from the road onto yards. It has even been suggested by one property owner we

go back to the old method of plowing the sidewalks. We will continue to monitor this and try to reach an acceptable balance—safe and cleared sidewalks, with minimal damage to property owners' yards and shrubs. This past Saturday evening/Sunday am storm resulted in damage to Truck #8, a 2002 International. The dump body is broken in half, has been 'band aided' to try and get us through the balance of this winter, but is clearly on its last legs. This vehicle is on the Public Works Dept. Equipment Replacement schedule for this coming year. I'd like very much to host a tour of the Town Garage and the various pieces of equipment for all Finance Committee members and Selectboard members (including incoming Board members), to explain the need and uses for each piece.

### **Photovoltaic Solar Project**

The Energy Committee has continued to meet the past few weeks, in an effort to come up with a project that makes financial sense for the community. The spreadsheets simply are not coming together on what originally appeared to be a doable project, despite having the \$220,000 Clean Energy Development Fund grants in hand. The Committee has invested literally hundreds of hours in developing a PV project that would work financially and garner the support of the Finance Committee and getting it to your Board, but that appears unlikely at this point. So, I believe the Committee, under the leadership of Alan Berolzheimer, will be making a recommendation to not proceed with the project that appeared so promising early on.

### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

I attended the most recent TAC meeting at the offices of TRORC at the King Farm in Woodstock. As you know, Phil Dechert generally goes to these, and occasionally I fill in. This was a good meeting, wherein I was able to express my concerns about (1) bridge funding and (2) the weight limits that are now being enforced on our Interstate highway system in Vermont. I've written Sen. Leahy's office on your behalf, and have encouraged Linda Kelley from MCS to write as well. I know our Senator is working on introducing a new bill that would make it permanently ok for the 99,000 lb. trucks to travel the interstates.

We have several bridges in poor condition on Turnpike Road, and if any one of them goes out, we will have a real situation on our hands with residents stranded. As you know, these bridges were all washed out in the great flood of 1927, rebuilt in 1928 and 1929, and have had no substantial upgrades since. I have shared my concerns with our Regional Planning Agency, and we will continue to advocate for more funding and more grants to replace these aging bridges all over the state.

## **Selectboard Appointed Committees—Public Works and Capital Facilities**

We have received about 8 or 9 residents interested in serving on one or the other of these two committees. We will continue to process the interest and send out more information as your Board develops the charge for Public Works.

## **Dispatch Services**

We are reviewing the services provided for our Emergency Service personnel from the Town of Hartford, and I will have a more detailed report for you soon, laying out options and costs. We've been informed the fee will be increasing by 2%, and have not been all that happy with the quality of dispatch services the past couple years.

That's about it for this period. I look forward to the annual Town Meeting.