



Peter B. Webster
Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Peter B. Webster, Town Manager

DATE: Feb. 18, 2011

SUBJECT: Information for the Selectboard

Tax Collections

As we all are painfully aware, the second installment for property taxes was due last Friday at 4:30 pm. I will forward to you the latest summary of where we stand with delinquent taxes as of today, one week after the due date (when we print the delinquent tax warrant). Of a total tax billing of \$14,135,296, 1.88% (\$265,308) is currently delinquent. That compares with 1.76% delinquent from 09/10 and compares favorably with 2.29% from 08/09, arguably during a more difficult financial environment for many taxpayers this year than previous years. Each year I get one or two residents who, for whatever reason, pay their tax bill a day or two late and argue/plead that I should be able to forgive the 8% penalty plus 1% interest. I point out that this is something we collectively vote on each year at Town Meeting—setting the two payment dates, and establishing the penalties and interest for those who miss the final payment. Yes, it is a severe, draconian penalty, but each year we decide upon this for a reason. That reason is to encourage people to pay on time and to protect the 98.1% of taxpayers who did make the successful effort this year to pay prior to the deadline. We take in well over \$1,000,000 the very last day that taxes are due, and I remind people that 'stuff happens' on that last day that might interfere with and prevent the timely payment if one waits until the very last minute. What is one saving by waiting until that last day, rather than paying it several days prior to the due date? This policy has to be hard and fast, has to be black and white, with no wiggle room for subjective leniency, and I hope our residents understand and appreciate that. A deadline is a deadline.

Roberta has done a great job the past two weeks, breaking in a new assistant (Jill Haney, for those of you who may not yet have met her) during that time while handling the ever-increasing volume of payments as the tax deadline approached. We might want to consider a new policy, one where we do not accept postmarks (which is the case with more and more Vermont towns). The smaller, rural Post Offices do not postmark the mail anymore, as it goes to White River Jct. PO, and we will be running into issues trying to determine when the payment was actually posted.

Lister Department

The Listers have lost the part-time duties of Jonathan Bynum, who has been their office assistant and an invaluable asset for the Listers since March 2006. The Listers are currently training a new assistant, sharing Jill Haney's time with Roberta, as she takes over the responsibilities formerly covered by Jonathan.

Local Government Day

This past week I spent most of Wednesday up in the halls of our State Capitol building with other Town and City Managers, Selectpersons, and others to meet with our legislators. The annual event is a good opportunity to bone up on the latest legislative initiatives, to lobby with the League our representatives on specific Town issues and to hear from our new Governor Shumlin. I sat in on Margaret Cheney's committee, the Committee on Natural Resources and Energy (of which she is Vice Chair), as they were hearing testimony on her bill H.155, the PACE program. She may be able to join us for your meeting on the 23rd to further explain the details of this legislation, which I fully support. If not your next meeting, she will join us for the March 9th meeting.

Leadership Upper Valley

Tracy Hall hosted the monthly meeting for this group last week, a large class of 27. This is the same course that our Treasurer, Chief of Police and I went through last year, a course that I recommend. This year one of our residents, Demosthenes Sofronas, is enrolled and thoroughly enjoying and gaining from the course. Anyone wishing to learn more can contact Vital Communities (www.vitalcommunities.org) for all the details.

Miscellaneous

- Candidates Forum is Tuesday, the 22nd at 7 PM here at Tracy Hall, and I hope we get a great turnout for that event.
- Town Reports were mailed out yesterday, which meets the dates set forth in the Vermont State Statutes. Each year this is a herculean task to get all reports in from everyone in a timely fashion, collating and proofing the final draft, getting it off to the printer in time to be in the hands of the voters at

least ten days prior to Town Meeting. Kudos go out to many, but especially Nancy Kramer, Jean Lawe and Neil Fulton who give so much of their time and expertise in this annual effort. Also this year we have a new printer, R.C. Brayshaw in Lebanon, who prints town reports for about 40 other towns in NH and VT, many with the same deadlines as ours. Also thanks go out to Doug Lufkin who does the design, lay-out and editing. Thanks!