



Peter B. Webster
Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Peter B. Webster, Town Manager

DATE: March 4, 2011

SUBJECT: Information for the Selectboard

Selectboard Organization

I want to congratulate our three newest Selectboard members on their recent elections and fine campaigns, Linda Cook, Steve Flanders and Christopher Ashley. I think this Board has great potential to work well together and get much accomplished over the next year, after observing the interaction at their first organizational meeting. I look forward to working with and for them as we try and make Norwich an even better community.

Delinquent Tax Collections

I have received a number of unhappy communications from property owners who failed (for various reasons) to pay their second tax installment on time. Most people do understand the need for the penalty and a sharp cut-off date, but some simply refuse to accept the reasoning behind an 8% penalty on top of the interest charge of 1% for the first 3 months, then 1 ½ % every month thereafter. We might want to have a discussion about this at an upcoming meeting to review this practice, one that I do support as is practiced by almost all other towns in Vermont. But every year I hear from a handful who will not accept the argument that we vote on this penalty each year to be imposed on ourselves.

Budget Update Through February

Roberta has run the latest budget analysis, eight months down with four to go. We are right where we should be on the expenditure side, which is 68.5%. It has been an extremely difficult winter for Public Works, but we still have adequate supplies of salt and sand, and even have a healthy balance for overtime. I think all Department Heads are continuing to monitor their individual budgets, and Andy is right there with his budget as well. But, winter's not over yet. . . .

Listers Department

Congratulations to the three Listers, especially to the two newest elected Listers, Liz Blum and Ernie Ciccotelli. I sat in on the organizational meeting of this new board Wednesday; Jonathan Vincent has less than a year's experience but clearly has the most time in this office, and has been elected to be the Chair as we head into the Town-wide reappraisal utilizing the services of Bill Krajeski and his company NEMC. I want to thank both Dennis Kaufman and Richard Blacklow for their many years of service to the Town, and wish them both well. We can all agree that maintaining equity in our 1596 parcels is not an easy or enviable task, and I wish our three new Listers all the best as we proceed with the much-needed reappraisal.

Town Eating Day

The fifth edition of TED went off well last Saturday, wedged between two days of winter storms on Friday and Sunday. Turn out was fairly light at 10 AM, but grew steadily as the morning sessions moved towards a great lunchtime. Hats off to Watt Alexander, Henry Scheier, Terry Boone, Rob Gurwitt, and Lisa Cadow, the organizers, not to mention all the cooks who contributed to the delicious spread. I sat in on the Planning Commission session and the School Board discussion, both informative and well attended. Perhaps the great ski conditions and brilliant blue sky day kept some away from the MCS, but this is a unique and wonderful effort to convene and work towards strengthening our community.

Miscellaneous

Solar Project is off for present until a project such as this makes better financial sense. There was much information gained by the entire Energy Committee and myself about a complicated and large PV system such as we'd hoped for up at the DPW property, so the numerous meetings were not in vain. There may well be changes coming in the subsidies for these types of renewable energy efforts, and if that occurs we should be well versed to move forward again. I would like to focus on the PACE program (Margaret Cheney's bill) that has been tweaked over the past two years, for a future Town vote.

We had a major water break (about 50 gallons/minute) right near the I-91 southbound on-ramp Wednesday evening. Brion did an outstanding job under difficult winter conditions to get this repaired by Friday afternoon and water back on to the affected properties (McKenna Road neighborhood and the Gateway Condominiums). The southbound on ramp had to be closed all day Thursday, then the northbound off ramp for most of Friday morning, which necessitated coordination with the emergency services. This will be an expensive repair for the Fire District, but we are very fortunate to have the likes of Brion McMullan heading up that department with his decades of experience. I'd like to have Brion come before your Board sometime in the next few meetings to discuss the Prudential Committee, Fire District and their upcoming plans for the year, and how they will impact Town issues. One of our DPW projects is new drainage along Main Street, new curbing and sidewalks, from roughly Carpenter Street on into town. This road also needs to be paved at some point as well, and we'd like to do all this at one time.