

Part II

Town Boards, Commissions, Committees & Departments

Selectboard

At long last, it appears Norwich will add significantly to its stock of affordable housing! When the Agway property north of town came on the market, the Selectboard, working with the Planning Commission, adopted a zoning amendment allowing greater density on this property. After much patient work by the Affordable Housing Committee, the parties involved signed a sales contract, contingent on septic capacity and other usual caveats.

Kendall Station Road seems to have wandered onto private property. After a lengthy study, it appears the solution will be to move the road slightly to the south to be completely within the Town right of way. The lease between Norwich Square and the U.S. Post Office is expiring. We passed a resolution urging both parties to keep the Post Office where it is.

After hearing complaints of excessive fines on overweight trucks, we had lively meetings with many truckers and passed a truck weight ordinance stating that compliance with State regulations means compliance with Norwich regulations. We were gratified that all parties were willing to work together to achieve this.

We began the process of updating the Town's personnel policies; final adoption occurred subsequently.

We entered an appeal to the Vermont Environmental Court supporting a decision of the Development Review Board that had denied Simpson Development's request to develop a five-unit townhouse structure at the southern entrance to town. Our appeal was denied in June 2006.

We hosted a potluck supper to honor volunteers. We hope this will be an annual event!

Alison May (Chair), Jack Candon, Gerard Chapdelaine, Ed Childs, Ben Ptashnik

Town Manager & Collector of Delinquent Taxes

As Norwich moves toward the five-year mark operating under Selectboard, Town Manager form of government, I am encouraged by the increased resident, visitor and business contacts that Nancy Kramer and I respond to daily. I am beginning to sense a community-wide understanding that the Town Manager's Office is the "go to" place and that is as it should be, allowing the Selectboard to focus on policy matters.

There were significant accomplishments in the 2006 fiscal year. We revised (essentially recreated) our employee personnel policies, with the help of the staff. We now have a solid human resource tool. Roberta Robinson, Finance Director, led the development of a Financial Management Policy. The Selectboard developed a Budget Management Policy, with assistance from the Town Manager's Office and the Finance Office. Town Counsel Frank Olmstead assisted with the development of Worker Compensation Waivers for independent contractors hired by the town, thereby correcting a standing insurance liability. We negotiated a new three-year contract with the Norwich Police Department, and a better contract for solid waste processing with Northeast Waste.

Nancy Kramer, Administrative Assistant, as our Wellness Coordinator, has succeeded with several wellness programs for our staff, including a smoking cessation program. We continue to improve the working conditions for our Transfer Station attendants, and the Highway crew always exceeds my expectations. The Police Department is working toward national recognition for agencies our size and the Chief initiated an Alzheimer's Assistance Program.

Officer Larry Lamphere left the Norwich Police Department for reemployment with the Windsor County Sheriffs Department. Phillip Brunelle was hired to replace him. Jonathan Bynum joined our Listers Office and has become a cornerstone.

The Town ended the fiscal year with approximately \$446,000 in our Undesignated Fund balance. This was a very successful year, and I take this opportunity to thank the Selectboard, staff and community for their continued support.

As Town Manager, it is my responsibility to act as the Collector of Delinquent Taxes. Taxes become delinquent after the second payment is due in February if taxes remain unpaid. A Warrant is issued by the Treasurer authorizing the collection of delinquent taxes along with an 8% penalty and 1% interest per month for the first three months and 1.5% interest thereafter. A tax collection policy outlines the collection process, which includes payment applications, payment plans and tax sale procedures, if necessary.

Tax Year Summary for 2005 - 2006

Taxes Billed:	\$ 12,572,048.54
Taxes Collected during FY:	\$ <u>12,502,124.63</u>
Taxes outstanding at close of FY:	\$ 69,923.91

Delinquent Tax Report

6/30/2005 Delinquent Tax Balance:	\$ 65,280.34
05-06 Delinquent Taxes:	\$ <u>238,356.95</u>
Subtotal:	\$ 303,637.29
Less delinquent taxes collected & abatements:	\$ <u><u>221,022.27</u></u>
6/30/2006 Balance:	\$ 82,615.02
Taxes delinquent for FY 05/06	\$ <u>69,923.91</u>
Taxes delinquent previous years	\$ <u>12,691.11</u>
Total	\$ 82,615.02
Delinquent taxes as of December 31, 2006	\$ 53,740.92

Stephen J. Soares, Town Manager (649-0127)

Town Clerk

Last year we began to see changes in our Election Laws to conform with HAVA. (Help America Vote Act). One of the changes was the implementation of the Statewide Voter Checklist. There are still some minor bugs to work out but all in all this change has gone quite well.

With the Intelligence Reform Law, Birth and Death Records will no longer be retained at the town level, but will be housed and recorded at the State level. All states must become "closed" for birth and possibly death certificates. Only family members and legal guardians will have access to copies of these certificates. It is still unclear how this may affect genealogists; they may have access to records pre-1935 but a definitive date and where these records will be stored have not been determined at this time. Please note that this change is not currently in effect, but we will begin to see changes within the next year, and at the latest two years.

We are continuing to see a slowdown in the amount of documents recorded in our office. This year we recorded 3,877 pages, which amounted to \$23,262 of income for the town. Last year we recorded 4,271 pages in the Land Records.

In our third year of processing passports, we have processed 39. This is almost twice as many as last year, resulting in \$1,170 of income for the town. In 2006, we processed 192 motor vehicle registration renewals, licensed 584 dogs, and sold 357 fish and game licenses.

The Town Clerk's Office is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; on Thursday we are open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. During this time you may come in and register to vote, purchase cards to the Norwich Transfer Station as well as the Hartford Landfill, renew your motor vehicle registration, obtain a passport, or research the records in the vault. Also, if you are not sure of a town procedure or where you might need to go to obtain information, stop in and we will try to point you in the right direction.

If you have any questions or need help, please do not hesitate to ask.

Bonnie J. Munday, Town Clerk (649-1419)

Vital Records for 2006

As recorded by the Town Clerk's Office January 1 to December 31, 2006

Births

There were no birth records in the Town Clerk's Office for 2006.

Deaths

French, Gloria L.	Lewis, Jane
Perkins, Marlene Mae	Rising, Mary
Valencia, Jose Ignacio	Miller, Janelle
Ames, Warren Jr.	West, Clifford B. Jr.
Cook, Larry B.	Domingue, Florence

Marriages

LeBrun, David MichaelDollar, Eliza Jane
Taylor, Bradley WilliamIrwin, Rebecca E.
Cooley, Michael RobertCastro, Christine Lynn
Memmi, GuidoBenelli, Sarah Angelina
Hanna, James AnthonySherwin, Zephyr T.
Richter, Claude BrunoAckerman, Jane Benson
Herzberg, David LowellHatton, Erin Elizabeth
Rozycki, Alan AndrewKittredge, Diane
Durst, Joshua LeeTarczewski, Lorraine Teresa
Kennedy, Donald T.Burke, Sharon A.
Sternner, Benjamin BarrettFlynn, Erin Marie
Gallagher, Lon Harlow Jr.Simpson, Linsey Anne
Garcia, Felipe TanausuMonahan, Kristin Marie
Yesman, David Alan IILaRowe, Nancy
Maguire, Matthew JamesPrice, Jennifer Marie
Benson, Micah JamesBirdsey, Amanda Brooke

Civil Unions

Weale, Gerald RalphSprouse, Herbert Warren
Munsey, Cathy AnnBallou, Terri Lynn

Affordable Housing Committee

Since 2002, the Norwich Affordable Housing Committee has been charged with recommending actions necessary to ensure that a continuum of affordable housing stock is available in Norwich. Members of the committee meet with town, state, and regional commissions, committees, boards, coalitions, and housing entities to work toward adding affordable housing in Norwich. The committee has pursued every realistic location for adding some new mixed housing to Norwich. We also worked in collaboration with other town and local entities to pool finances and resources to add and maintain existing affordable housing in Norwich.

The committee is thankful for the support from the town - including last year's vote making funds available for three years (to be returned to the town after the three years). In Norwich, we will now be able to move quickly when an appropriate property becomes available. The high cost of land in Norwich continues to be a hurdle; however, a determined committee effort, access to the funds, and Selectboard backing should help further our mission.

In April, we again learned that the "Agway" property was back on the market, and as of the end of this reporting period, we (Housing Vermont, Twin Pines, Domus, and our committee) continue to negotiate with the seller for this piece of property.

Members of the committee learn and participate in educating others about the need for, barriers to, and availability (or lack thereof) of affordable housing in Norwich and throughout the Upper Valley. We welcome residents and other interested citizens during our meetings, typically 7 pm on the third Monday of every month downstairs in the Norwich Public Library.

Creigh Moffatt (649-5533), Mary Anne Hankel (6495232), Co-Chairs

Auditors

The town's three elected auditors are statutory officials whose principal responsibility is to prepare the annual Town Report for voters. The auditors meet with the independent accountants to review the town's annual financial statements and the independent accountants' management letter, which includes their suggestions for improving financial controls and operating procedures. The auditors regularly attend Selectboard and School Board meetings to observe and advise, and also prepare monthly reconciliations of the town's various bank accounts. Each auditor is elected to a three-year term of office, and the terms are staggered. As a result of past decisions, each auditor serves as a member of both the Norwich and Dresden Finance Committees.

Henry Scheier, Chair (649-1387)

Boards of Abatement and Civil Authority

Between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006, the Board of Abatement heard three requests for abatement of taxes on property damaged or destroyed by fire or water. These were granted.

In the same period and as usual, the Board of Civil Authority assisted the Town Clerk with elections and town meetings. It also heard and acted upon eleven appeals from decisions of the Board of Listers.

Nancy H. Dean, Chair (649-1324)

Cemetery Commission

The Cemetery Commissioners are responsible for the care and upkeep, as well as necessary improvements, of all Norwich cemeteries and they hold their regular meetings once a month in the room off the Town Clerk's office in Tracy Hall. The dates of the meetings are posted on the town bulletin board.

Plans for expanding and further developing Hillside Cemetery are in the works. The surveying has been done and the hope is to proceed with making roads, installing drainage and laying out the lots next summer. This fall more grave stones will be straightened and cleaned in Hillside Cemetery. Corner markers are now being placed on all new lots when they are sold.

This past summer we have agreed to take on the care and upkeep of the Union Village Cemetery. Norwich has always cared for a small portion and now that the Union Village Association has disbanded we have assumed the maintenance of the whole cemetery.

Fred Spaulding, Chair (649-1121)

Conservation Commission

Among the projects undertaken by the Norwich Conservation Commission (NCC) in 2006 were:

- Providing \$3,400 in financial support from the Conservation Trust Fund towards maintaining conservation easements on three Norwich properties.
- Consulting and advocacy for protection of fragile features in the new town zoning regulations, including an inventory to support efforts to protect them. The NCC supported 20 percent of the training for 16 people enrolled in the Keeping Track program who will help the NCC locate wildlife habitat and travel corridors.
- On-going mapping of vernal pools on private lands. About 40 Norwich landowners invited the NCC to evaluate and inventory possible pools on their lands. The NCC made 104 site visits. Students from the Cross School also contributed to the field work. Altogether 164 pools were located and mapped and a forum was held on May 3. The full report and a map on Norwich's vernal pools can be found at the NCC web page.
- Completion of the multi-use trail on Parcel 5 and the new parking lot off Beaver Meadow Road. An opening celebration was sponsored by all the partners whose efforts built this trail. The focus for the next season are sections of the Ballard and Gile Mountain Trails.
- Tabulation of the 2005 water sampling study results. There were several dates when E-coli levels went above state limits for recreational use, typically following high water flow in the tributaries. The E-coli found in the village was probably not caused by failing septic systems but by non-human sources such as farm waste and wild animals. A map of the sampling sites is posted on the NCC web page.

Lee Michaelides, Secretary (649-2103)

Corridor Steering Committee

The Norwich corridor transportation enhancement project promises to improve VT10A and US 5 from a highway to a "Main Street" that better accommodates bicyclists and pedestrians. This year the Corridor Steering Committee continued to work on the design and engineering plans that incorporated all the changes recommended by Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) officials. We submitted a grant application for additional project funding to cover the anticipated construction costs. Now we are working with VTrans to secure a final decision and/or approval.

The Town of Norwich was awarded a Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant for analyzing sidewalks/bicycle path feasibility along the south side of VT10A and US 5. This grant had to be used this year, so we hired David Saladino from Resource Systems Group to complete the work. We discovered most of the south-side corridor could not easily support bicycle/pedestrian facilities (due in part to the extreme roadside slopes). However, the Montshire Road and nearby interchange ramp can be improved to connect the Montshire Museum sidewalk to the existing sidewalk system, and we will work with Montshire officials to explore that project. The full report with maps is available for review at my office.

Overseeing project development has been our Corridor Steering Committee. Committee members take time from their day-to-day responsibilities to attend meetings, take on project work, and facilitate communication with town residents and the Selectboard. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge them here: Neil Fulton, Norwich resident; Phil Dechert, Norwich Zoning Administrator; Andy Hodgdon, Norwich Highway Foreman; and Chuck Wise, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

We cannot succeed without the help of our professionals, who are qualified and able to see the corridor project constructed. Bob White and his SVE Associates colleagues have spent a great deal of effort to advance our design, engineering, and permitting. I would like to thank Bob for this service.

Stephen J. Soares, Town Manager (649-0127)

Development Review Board

The Development Review Board (DRB) is a seven-member board appointed by the Selectboard, with two alternate members who can substitute for absent members. The DRB meets on the first and third Thursdays of the month in Tracy Hall. All meetings are open to the public and all hearings are recorded on audio tape.

Our responsibility is to hold hearings on subdivision applications, site plan reviews, conditional uses and appeals. Following a hearing, the DRB deliberates and then issues a written decision. We evaluate the application against the rules and standards in the Norwich Subdivision and Zoning Regulations. These were written by the Planning Commission and adopted by the Selectboard; the DRB simply applies them. While very few applications are turned down we quite often can help the applicant improve the proposed development.

The DRB has prepared three informational sheets which describe how an application is prepared, heard and decided. One sheet is directed to helping applicants, another to the abutters and neighbors of a proposed development and a third to help members of the public understand how the DRB operates. These sheets are available from the Zoning Administrator.

Notices of hearings are published and advertised. Placards are posted at development sites and minutes are published. You can ask to be added to the email list for notice of DRB activities. We aim to make sure the public knows about proposed developments in Norwich.

John E. Lawe, Chair (649-1585)

Emergency Management

Emergency Management's responsibility is to prepare for disasters and to coordinate responses to situations that may demand extraordinary action. Historically, floods, various kinds of storms, fires, and spills of hazardous materials have been Emergency Management's concern. Terrorism and pandemics now join the list.

Day-to-day preparations are made by each town department, with training and material stockpiling overseen by the department head and Town Manager. Plans exist for activation of an emergency operations center. Cooperation with state and federal organizations, as well as private businesses is part of our action plan. The Town

Manager is by statute the Director of Emergency Management. He is assisted by the Fire Chief and all other department heads in the event of a major emergency.

An example of emergency management at work occurred in 2004 when a storm caused a large tree to fall across the south end of Main Street. Power lines were taken down, cutting off power to much of the town. Traffic control was provided by Norwich Police and fire personnel. Green Mountain Power responded with several crews; Vermont Agency of Transportation cleared the road. The Fire Department responded to two reports of fire or smoke in the area. Cooperation among the various agencies was impressive. Our new emergency generator(s) at the fire/police complex and Tracy Hall provided power, and meetings at both locations were able to proceed. Our initial shelter location, the Norwich Inn, continued to serve meals and accommodate room guests using their own generator, and power was restored to most of the town fairly rapidly. Plans for emergency power at the Highway Garage are being developed.

Charles Hodgdon, Emergency Management Coordinator (649-1659)

Energy Committee

During FY'06 the Norwich Energy Committee (NEC) conducted the following activities:

- Administered an energy audit of the town garage and got estimates to replace the single-paned windows and hollow metal exterior doors.
- Helped the Marion Cross School administration create the RFPs on the lighting upgrades and solar photovoltaic installation that were approved by the voters in March 2006.
- Worked extensively with the Biomass Energy Resource Group on the proposed wood chip boiler for the Marion Cross School.
- Helped to organize a local meeting with a representative of the Union of Concerned Scientists.
- Distributed literature and recommendations on solutions to global warming including energy conservation, renewable energy, and state and federal incentives at various local events.
- Consulted with many residents on energy conservation and renewable energy options for their homes.
- Consulted with a business on reducing their carbon emissions.
- Presented at a statewide workshop on creating town energy committees.
- Presented at Green Mountain College on implementing use of biodiesel at the college.
- Continued to experiment with 100% biodiesel for home heating and year-round driving.
- Gave literature and a presentation to Dan and Whit's about installing a biodiesel pump for automobiles.

*Alan Berolzheimer, Chair (649-2857; bercrest@sover.net)
Ames Byrd (649-3905; ames.byrd@valley.net)*

Finance Committee

The seven-member Norwich Finance Committee, composed of the three elected auditors, three elected Finance Committee members and the Town Treasurer, has advisory responsibilities in the creation of annual budgets for both the town and the Norwich School District. Together with a like number of members from Hanover, the committee constitutes the Finance Committee for the Dresden School District, with similar budget oversight duties. Both committees meet most frequently in December and January, when all three budgets are being prepared for submission to Town Meeting in March.

The Finance Committee's mission is to help provide fiscal restraint and discipline, and to increase public understanding of issues affecting local taxation. During this fiscal year, the Finance Committee, at the request of the Selectboard, began to craft financial policies for the Selectboard that are in keeping with the change to a town manager form of government. In September, the committee presented a forum on how tax rates are set. In July, a subcommittee presented to the Selectboard its report on the review of the Police Department.

The Finance Committee generally meets at 8:00 a.m. in Tracy Hall on the third Tuesday of each month. Interested members of the public are welcome at all meetings and frequently contribute to discussions.

Karen G. Kayen, Chair (649-2747)

Finance Office

The Finance Office is responsible for all accounting functions for the town. How does that relate to the corresponding bookkeeping? For fiscal year 05-06 it meant the collection of over \$12 million in current school and town taxes and \$209,000 in delinquent taxes for 1,518 parcels/accounts. We also collected all other revenues for the town of over \$1.2 million. We wrote roughly 3060 checks from 22 different funds to pay \$2.9 million in bills and processed payroll of over \$1.0 million to over 100 full- and part-time employees. We also maintain and update the town's Fixed Asset records, which grew this year by \$1.2 million. In addition to providing these fiscal services for all town departments, we also complete all financial reporting to local officials and other government agencies. An integral part of our work is to respond to inquiries from lawyers, real estate professionals and bankers regarding property located in Norwich.

This year the legislature has once again changed the rules on education taxes. Form HS-131 has now been changed to form HS-122. This new form combines the Homestead Declaration with the forms for any property tax adjustments. These forms are due by April 17, 2007 (regardless of whether you file an extension for your state and federal taxes) and can be found in the Vermont Income Tax Booklet or on-line at www.vermont.gov. The other significant change is that property tax adjustment payments will be coming to the town rather than as checks to individuals. You may also direct your income tax refund to be sent to the town as a payment on your real estate taxes.

Roberta Robinson, Finance Officer (649-0122)

Fire Department

The Norwich Fire Department's mission is to protect life, property and the environment. This is accomplished by providing high-quality fire suppression, rescue, first responder emergency medical, hazardous materials, fire prevention and public education services. Additionally, the department responds to terrorist incidents, assists in the search for lost persons, provides mutual-aid to surrounding towns and responds to weather-related disasters.

We had 25 fire/rescue training sessions and 13 emergency medical training sessions in FY06 to maintain operational competency and meet state and federal requirements for mandatory training. In addition, a number of members attended training courses on specialty subjects. The FAST Squad is licensed at the EMT-I level and is equipped at the EMT-B level. One member completed Firefighter I training this year. We currently have 33 active members with 10 trained at the Firefighter I level, two at the Firefighter II level, one at the Fire Officer I level, 19 at the EMT-B level and one at the EMT-I level. We continue to maintain an Insurance Services Office Public Protection Classification of 4, one of the highest in the area.

During FY06 we received three new mobile radios to improve interoperability, high-visibility traffic vests to improve safety on roadway incidents, a water vacuum, cellar pump and high-expansion foam generator - all to improve member safety and fire, rescue and salvage capabilities.

Plans include continued participation in a study of future space needs for fire/police facilities to expand to meet current code requirements, continued improvement and expansion of rural water supply capabilities, and establishment of a fire training facility. Our most pressing need is to recruit and train new members. Our most precious assets are our current members trained and dedicated to an admirable 24/7 response to fire, rescue and medical calls.

Since I retired from the Fire Department on December 31, 2006, this is my last town report. My thanks to the Selectboard, Town Manager, all our firefighters and FAST Squad members and especially townspeople for your past support. My 51 years in the Fire Department have been a wonderful and rewarding experience.

Jack Fraser, Fire Chief
Neil R. Fulton, Deputy Fire Chief (649-1133)

Fire Report

Type	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06
Structure	11	7	11	10	9	8	6	3
Auto	17	16	18	20	33	32	43	36
Wildfire	5	2	5	5	1	5	3	6
CO Detector	0	1	2	1	2	3	4	7
False Call	15	9	14	10	19	16	40	26
Mutual Aid	4	6	3	8	4	13	5	14
Other	4	12	15	11	17	22	4	12
Arson ¹	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Medical				15	79	94	117	102
TOTAL	56	53	68	80	164	193	222	206

¹ Not included in total

Firefighters and FAST Squad 2005-06

James Alberghini*, Mark Anderson*, Mary Anderson***, Toni Apgar**, James Austin***, Jake Blum***, Susan Blum***, Charlene Bradley**, Phil Brunelle (Captain)***, James L. Cook*, Linda Cook*, Marie D'Amato***, Lisanne Dorion**, Jack Fraser (Chief)*, Neil Fulton (Deputy Chief)***, Matt Herbert**, Douglas Hoffman**, Kim Wood-Hoffman**, Michael Hooper-Goetinck**, Regina Hubbard***, Timothy Keeney*, Nancy LaRowe (Fire Warden)***, John Lawe**, David LeBrun (Captain)*, Bonnie Munday**, Ryan Murphy*, Robin Rice**, Pete Schwab (Lieutenant)*, Matt Swett*, Lloyd Tebbetts (Assistant Chief)*, Chris Thayer***, Warren Thayer*, Jay Whitehair***

* Fire, ** FAST, *** Fire/FAST

Fire Warden

The Norwich Forest Fire Warden regulates open burning within the Town by issuing burn permits, educating Norwich residents in proper burning practices and suppressing wildland fires with the assistance of the Fire Department. More than 250 burn permits were issued in 2006.

There are a few conditions and responsibilities that go along with being issued a permit to burn. Only the burning of natural wood materials is permitted, which does not include plywood or painted wood. The permittee is responsible for having enough tools and help to control the burn. Burning when windy is extremely dangerous so extinguish the fire immediately if the winds pick up. An open burn cannot be left unattended and must be completely extinguished before leaving.

Burn permits are free and can be picked up from the Town Clerk's office weekdays or from me at home. Permits can be issued a few days in advance, so please plan ahead for burning on weekends and holidays. Please feel free to call with any questions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Nancy LaRowe (649-8807)

Health Officer

The Health Officer (HO) and Deputy are responsible for public health in the community. This includes dealing with hazards such as surfacing sewage and improper disposal of dead animals, and enforcement of the Vermont Rental Housing Code. Another responsibility is to work with the Police Department in cases where a dog or wild animal has bitten a human. There is a mandatory 10-day confinement for dogs and the HO checks that the dog remains healthy.

There have been only a few reports of serious diseases in Vermont this year. We have been monitoring for possible outbreaks of West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and the always present threat of rabies. Remember to use insect repellent to discourage mosquito bites and long trousers to protect against Lyme disease-bearing ticks. And there is the ever-present hazard of lead poisoning from old paint, asbestos and radon in the home.

Although avian flu has not yet caused a problem, experts warn that another pandemic will surely arrive in due course. If not avian flu, then some other biological agent. Remember to protect your household members by laying in non-perishable food and water enough for seven days and other emergency supplies as a precaution.

If you have a public health question, we can be reached at the numbers below, or through the Norwich Town Manager's office: 649-0127.

John E. Lawe, M.D., Norwich Health Officer (649-1585)

Bonnie Munday, Deputy Health Officer (649-1419)

Highway Department

The main goal of the Norwich Highway Department is to provide safe and convenient roadways throughout the year for everyone. We strive to meet the needs and demands of an active and growing community. Once again this year we have completed many important projects, which help to address some long-standing issues.

At 11:30 p.m. on October 8, 2005, I received a call from Hartford Dispatch stating that we had a large washout on Bragg Hill Road. As it turned out, a box culvert that was built right after the 1927 flood had collapsed. We were able to obtain a Town Highway Emergency Grant from the Vermont Agency of Transportation, which covered 90% of the cost of replacing this culvert.

Also during the summer of 2006, we replaced two steel culverts on Bragg Hill, both listed in the town's All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. These culverts were replaced with cement box culverts; 90% funding for these projects was obtained through the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Bridge Grant Program. We continue our extensive culvert replacement program with 36 culvert installations completed in 2006. All of the related ditching was done along with these installations.

In the summer of 2006, the Norwich Highway Department in conjunction with R. J. Turner Company did a complete culvert and bridge inventory. The Town of Norwich is responsible for the maintenance of 814 culverts, bridges, and drop inlets plus 323 driveway culverts. This report confirmed that we are on the right track with our culvert replacement plan and that we need to remain proactive in this area. As of this writing, we are also in the process of developing an inventory and condition identification of our asphalt and gravel road surfaces. This is commonly known as an RSMS inventory. When completed, this will aid us in the development of a pavement management plan.

In conjunction with the Norwich Water Department, the Highway Department completed a sidewalk extension and new bus shelter. The new sidewalk extends from the Norwich Public Library's driveway to Norwich Senior Housing. The new bus shelter is beside the new sidewalk extension. The Norwich Highway Department continues to collaborate with other town departments on many projects. As the town continues to grow, this department-to-department collaboration becomes increasingly important in order to efficiently provide town services.

The Highway Department will be challenged financially again this year with the increased cost of petroleum products. These cost increases have affected every aspect of our operation. The most dramatic increase has been in the price of asphalt pavement.

I would like to thank the residents of Norwich for their patience and understanding through the inconveniences caused on the road by our summer construction projects. A department is only as good as the people who are part of it. I would like to commend the Highway Department staff for their continued hard work and dedication to the department and the Town of Norwich.

Andy Hodgdon, Highway Administrator (649-2209; Norwich highway@earthlink.net

*Highway staff: Neal Rich, John Thorp, Gary Durkee,
Robert Hodge, Albert Lewellyn, and Robert Martin Jr.*

Listers

As directed by the Vermont statutes, the Norwich Listers and Assessor continue to strive for assessments as near to 100% of fair market value as possible. In fact, the Vermont Department of Taxes has determined that, for 2006, Norwich assessments are 104.77% of the market value of those properties that have sold over the past three years. Rather than causing each household to pay extra property taxes, this high assessment percentage actually has the effect of keeping the educational component of our taxes as small and stable as it can be under current State law, to the benefit of all Norwich taxpayers.*

In preparation for the 2006 Norwich Grand List, the Listers and Assessor continued the process of inspecting and assessing all properties where there had been improvements (with or without zoning permits) and reassessing contiguous parcels under the same ownership. For the 2007 Grand List, the Listers will continue inspections, continue to examine the treatment of fences and ponds as a component of fair market value, and complete the work of reassessing contiguous parcels under the same ownership. Since the completion of the 2006 Grand List, the Listers have become increasingly aware that assessments for unimproved land differ from actual sales prices to an unsatisfactory degree. The Listers will rectify this by reassessing all unimproved parcels for the 2007 Grand List, so that virtually all owners of unimproved parcels will receive a change of assessment notice. Finally, the Listers have discovered that during the 2004 town-wide reassessment, some improved properties were erroneously not assessed a value for their foundations. The Listers will correct this error for the 2007 Grand List.

This year has seen a change in the Homestead Declaration form that must be filed annually with the Vermont Department of Taxes. The new form, now designated HS-122, replaces three forms from previous years. You must file form HS-122 if you own and occupy a Vermont property as your principal residence on April 1, 2007. In order to avoid certain penalties, the form must be filed by April 17, 2007, even if your Vermont income tax filing deadline is extended. The State will not accept any excuses. HS-122 includes space for income sensitivity filing for your "Property Tax Adjustment Claim." In the past, some Norwich residents have simply not filed their Homestead Declarations as they should have, presumably to take advantage of Norwich's lower non-residential education tax rate. When the Tax Department becomes aware of this, the penalty imposed is significant. Note that the Vermont Department of Taxes has instructed all Listers to report households that the Listers believe should have filed a Homestead Declaration.

As always, should you have questions or concerns about your assessment, you may contact the Listers for an informal discussion at 649-1116 or <listers@norwich.vt.us>. Change of assessment notices for this year will be sent out on June 4, 2007. Formal grievances must be lodged with the Listers in writing by June 19, 2007, and can be made whether or not your assessment has changed. It must be remembered that a formal grievance triggers a top-to-bottom review of the assessment of your entire property, and may possibly result in a higher assessment.

*Richard H. Blacklow, Jean M. Essex, Dennis M. Kaufman, Listers
Stephen R. Wheelock, Assessor*

* This "assessment percentage" is properly called the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and is one of the variables used by the State to determine our education property tax rates. For an explanation of the CLA, refer to the Listers' report in the 2005 Norwich Town Report, and a "Citizens Guide to the CLA," which can be found in the Town offices.

Grand List

Total Taxable Property (2005 Education Grand List)\$646,879,400
One percent (1%) of Total Grand List6,468,794

Real Estate Exemptions by Vote

Norwich Fire District40,000
Beaver Meadow Chapel Association109,200
Root District Game Club254,900
Upper Valley Community Grange Inc #34351,500
Veterans (7)70,000

Real Estate Exemptions by Agreement

Norwich Housing Corporation1,546,600

Real Estate Exemptions by Statute

Veterans, Statutory (7)70,000
Child Care Center, Inc800,900
Montshire Museum of Science5,044,100
Norwich Historical Society470,400
Norwich Nursery School152,700
The Family Place651,600
Sands Taylor and Wood Company (Vermont Public Radio)150,000
Andrew C. & Margaret R. Sigler Foundation2,017,100
Total9,286,800

Breakdown of Grand List

R-1 Residence with under 6A of Land (771)294,853,200
R-2 Residence with 6A of land or over (472)271,679,900
MH Mobile Home with or without land (17)2,437,900
C Commercial Properties (45)28,001,600
CA Commercial Apartments (6)3,429,100
UE Utilities Electric (4)6,180,700
UO Utilities Other (2)156,100
F Farms (11)8,070,600
Other (38)8,210,000
M Miscellaneous (164)21,860,300
Cable (Education Grand List only)1,230,700

Land Use Appraisal Program

Number of parcels enrolled in program130
Number of acres in program12,192.74
Exempt value of enrolled property16,163,100

Municipal Grand List as of:

31 December 2000312,877,615
31 December 2001321,825,071
31 December 2002332,006,393
31 December 2003339,041,736
31 December 2004Town-wide reappraisal583,060,623
31 December 2005622,504,834
31 December 2006644,879,700

Land Management Council

The Land Management Council had a busy year. Our mission is to manage the recreation and timber activities on the Fire District land, six different parcels totaling 917 acres. During the course of each year, we work with a forester who advises the Council on when a timber harvest should take place based on a combination of forest health and economic factors, in that order. All proceeds gained from timber harvests are reinvested in the land itself.

This past year, the Land Management Council continued to improve trails that traverse the Fire District lands. This included putting the finishing touches on the Parcel 5 multi-use trail. This trail was formally opened to the public during a dedication ceremony in September. Another major endeavor this year was the construction of foot bridges on the Ballard Trail, the trail that follows Charles Brown Brook from the town pool to Tucker Hill Road. This work was made possible thanks to grants from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) and the Norwich Women's Club. The work was completed during the summer by a crew of six plus two leaders from the VYCC. Special thanks go out to Peter and Sydney Griggs who graciously allowed the crew to camp on their property.

Clay Adams, Chair (649-8635)

Planning Commission

In this report year, the Commission continued working on revising the zoning regulations and started updating the Town Plan. The Town Plan project began with a public opinion survey, mailed to all Norwich residents and property owners in October 2005. There were 993 responses. The results have been tabulated and will be used in determining areas of focus for the public discussion phase. A second project was to collect, organize, analyze, and present demographic, economic, housing, fiscal impact, and other relevant data to support discussions and decisions regarding the goals, objectives, and policies in the plan. A consultant compiled the data and organized it into tables and graphs showing historic trends. Both these projects were partially funded by state municipal planning grants awarded to the town.

A major share of the members' effort was devoted to the ongoing process of revising the zoning regulations, a final draft of which will be ready in early 2007. In response to strong community interest in supporting affordable housing, the Planning Commission prepared an amendment to the current zoning regulations creating a new zoning district on the south side of Church Street from the existing Village Residential District to I-91 with a significant density bonus (195%) for Planned Residential Developments with at least 70% of the units affordable. This amendment was adopted by the Selectboard and became effective in December 2005. At the request of the Development Review Board, the Planning Commission prepared technical changes to the subdivision regulations which were also adopted by the Selectboard and became effective in February 2006.

Other activities included updates to the Planning Commission Bylaws, meeting with the Norwich Conservation Commission to discuss changes to the zoning, participating in a comprehensive review of the town planning and zoning by the regional commission and holding a special meeting to review the relationship of property taxes and land development.

The commission currently meets every second and fourth Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Minutes, regulations, the Town Plan, and other documents are available on the town website.

Daniel Johnson, Chair (649-5533)

Police Department

Our Police Department is committed to making the Town of Norwich a safe place to live, work and visit by providing the highest level of professional service to the community. It embraces a community policing, problem-solving philosophy in order to maximize efficiency and provide exceptional customer service to our residents. Effective communication between the Police Department and the community is a key element in that effort.

The Norwich Police Department has just recently been brought up to full complement with the hiring of Officer Kimberly Blanchard and the replacement of Officer Lamphere with Officer Phil Brunelle. Officer Blanchard comes with several years of experience not only as an officer but as a dispatcher; Officer Brunelle has several years of public safety service as a firefighter and EMT. Both officers will be an asset to this department and the town. With the full complement of officers, the department will be better able to implement new initiatives such as education for our children in Internet Safety and Identity Theft Prevention programs. The long-time Norwich Police Department administrative secretary, Anita Ferry, has chosen a new career, and we hired Martha Morse, who has 19 years experience in police dispatching and administrative work, as her replacement. Martha is fitting in well.

My commitment is to continue to work diligently to provide high-quality, professional law enforcement to the people we serve. Please feel free to stop in to meet the members of your police department.

Douglas A. Robinson, Chief (649-1460)

*Kim Blanchard, Patrol Officer; Michael McGee, Sergeant
Martha Morse, Administrative Secretary; Joseph Temple, Patrol Officer
Jim Beraldi, Part-Time Officer; Phil Brunelle, Patrol Officer*

Police Department Statistics 2005-2006

911 Hangups	18	Kidnapping	1
Abandoned Vehicle	2	Larceny	35
Accidents	74	Leaving Scene of Accident	4
Agency Assistance	245	Littering	5
Alarm	69	Lost or Found Property	41
Alcohol Offense	16	Missing Person	3
Animal Problem	76	Motorist Assistance	33
Arrest on Warrant	4	Motor Vehicle Disturbance	114
Assault	2	Noise Disturbance	19
Attempt to Evade Police	1	Parking Problem	128
ATV Incident	6	Phone Problem	3
Background Investigation	19	Property Damage	2
Bad Check	12	Property Check*	198
Burglary	6	Public Nuisance	1
Citizen Assistance	108	Recovered Stolen Property	2
Citizen Dispute	22	Residence/Vehicle Lockout	63
Condition of Release Violation	2	Sex Offense	2
Dead Body	4	Suicide	1
Domestic Abuse Order	1	Suspicious	142
Driving License Suspended	3	Traffic Citations	571
Drugs	5	Traffic Hazard	57
DUI	11	Traffic Warnings	386
Embezzlement attempted	1	Trespassing	24
Family Disturbance	10	Unsecure Premises	31
Firearms Offense	1	Utility Problem	6
Fireworks	1	Vandalism	15
Fish and Game Offense	6	Vehicle Serial # Inspection	84
Fraud	16	Vehicle Theft	1
Illegal Alien Detention	2	Welfare Check	21
Juvenile Problem	16	Miscellaneous	46
		Total	1,823

* The reduction in the “Property Check” number reported this year is due to a change in reporting procedure. The checks are now documented as a daily activity instead of individually. Property checks vary from a physical walk around a building to a visual check of the premises. There were 198 days when property checks were conducted; in those 198 days there were 1,993 individual checks completed. The checks are mainly private residences but public properties are also included as well.

Recreation Department

The Norwich Recreation Council's mission is to offer a variety of recreational activities to Norwich residents, catering to varied tastes, interests and ages. Our youth program provides offerings for kindergarten through sixth grade and is our primary focus. In all of our youth sports, we stress maximum participation, development of skills, and fun. We work with the school, PTO, Norwich Police and Norwich Inn organizing events to help foster and maintain community spirit. We are thrilled that the new owners of the Norwich Inn, Joe and Jill Lavin, as well as the new innkeepers, Jason and Tiffany Gershon, have graciously agreed to continue the tradition of co-sponsoring events with the Recreation Council; a practice begun with Sally and Tim Wilson. Our Council members, and many other volunteer residents and local businesses help us run a large percentage of our programs/events. We rely on them so we may fully function and appreciate their support, time and dedicated involvement.

There exists a Recreation Facilities Improvement Fund into which philanthropists can donate tax-deductible dollars to be used specifically for beautifying our town recreation areas. The fund is separate from the annual town budget so projects completed using this fund don't impact taxes in any way. This past year we had an amazing group of women approach the town about the possibility of replacing the playground beside the tennis courts at Huntley Meadow. They worked diligently for over a year on the project, planning and subsequently raising all the needed funds. Ultimately their vision and hard work paid off with a June installation/completion. Special thanks go out to the Norwich Community Playground Project Committee members: Sasha Cahoon, Justine Fahey, Becky French, Pam Miles, Ashley Milliken, Laurie Rosen, Tanya Swett and Signe Taylor. Thanks to the many anonymous individuals who toiled quietly behind the scenes as well. We received overwhelming support financially, and also physically, for site prep and installation, including extended families and philanthropists in surrounding towns. We are grateful to the many members and businesses of the Norwich and Upper Valley communities who contributed to this project, with Pete Stoddard, Matt Swett and Mike Wells going above and beyond.

The Recreation Department recently successfully applied for a \$10,000 grant from the state of Vermont. Most of the funds have gone toward our Huntley Meadow Fields Project, of which we plan to complete the final stage in 2007 or 2008. This will involve leveling the last undulating portion of Huntley Meadow (Field # 1). Our grant proposal included the purchase of ski grooming and tracking equipment, and so in January it was acquired. Thanks to volunteer help from Bob Fiskén dragging the trails, you can look forward to the Parcel 5 and Cossingham trails to be groomed for classic ski touring. Huntley Meadow will be groomed for both classic and skate skiing techniques, so be sure to get out and enjoy when the snow falls.

Please check the Recreation portion of our town website for the latest programs and happenings at www.norwich.vt.us. Be active and stay happy!

Jill Kearney, Director (649-3040; recreation@norwich.vt.us)

Recreation Council: Doug Kennedy, President, Kathy Menard, Secretary, Geoffrey Vitt, School Board liaison; Leslie Baker-Brown, Mary Bender, and John Trautlein (terms ended in '06); Lisa Adams, Lars Blackmore, Kristin Brown, Stuart Close, Ann Greenwald, Kate Halsey, Bernard Haskell, Hugh Huizenga, Kate Robinson, Eric Sachsse, Kris Strohhahn

Senior Action Council

The Norwich Senior Action Council consists of seven members appointed by the town. Our main purpose is to coordinate with the White River Council on Aging (the Bugbee Center in White River) to serve home-delivered meals to older people, shut-ins, and people just home from the hospital. We also coordinate with the Bugbee Center to take advantage of their many social programs for elders. At present, we are delivering only five meals, but this number has varied over time.

Martha Drake, Chair (649-1301)

Transfer Station

We made a few changes at the Transfer Station this year: a second ramp was built, a new recycling bin was added for glass separation and new signs were made which should help with your sorting. The biggest and most exciting change was that the Highway Department built us a new staff shed equipped with a propane heater! This year, we are hoping to have a new book shed built.

Again, we would like to remind everyone that the Transfer Station is open Wednesday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Town Manager's Office.

Judy Trussell, Lead Attendant

Tree Warden

The Tree Warden is primarily responsible for managing and clearing dead and diseased trees from the town right of way. This year we focused our work on projects along New Boston Road and Brigham Hill. Working closely with Andy Hodgdon and the Town Public Works Department, we continued to improve our proactive approach of trimming and improving the treescape on roads of Norwich. We have tried to do the tree work required for improved ditching and road maintenance so that this work is done on a decade-long cycle. We also always try to devote some resources toward planting trees on town land with an eye to the future. I would welcome any suggestions about public spaces that need more trees planted. Although there is always pressure to keep budgets down, my meeting with the Selectboard reinforced the support of our community for how much value trees add to our environment.

We continued to make excess hardwood cut in Norwich available to needy people in the Upper Valley, enabling them to get through the winter. Andy Hodgdon and his crew helped in this effort, and Killdeer Farm donated the use of its truck. We work with LISTEN and SEVCA to identify people who need the fuel. We need volunteers to help cut, split and deliver the wood and help coordinating these activities. If you can help with this, have wood to contribute or need to report tree problems, please contact me at any time.

Jake Blum, Tree Warden (649-2994)

Trustees of Public Funds

According to the Vermont Statutes, if a town elects Cemetery Commissioners, then the town also elects Trustees of Public Funds to manage any money in trust for the cemeteries of the town. The Trustees of Public Funds also manage any funds left in trust to the town and accepted by the Selectboard. The trustees are elected on a rotating basis for a three-year term. The trustees invest the trust monies not currently needed by the Selectboard or Cemetery Commissioners in order to obtain a return on the funds. We support the area banks with these investments, in accordance with the Vermont Statutes, requesting the current rate of investment for the term needed from at least five different institutions. As interest is earned, it is allocated to the respective fund. Disbursements are made from the funds when a written request is made by the Selectboard or the Cemetery Commissioners.

Trustees: Marie Elise Young, Barbara C. Merrill and Cheryl A. Lindberg (649-1678)

Zoning & Planning Office

Development in Norwich, as measured by nine permit applications for new homes, was less than last year and the same as the year before. Subdivision applications numbered the same as last year, but only two new lots were created because several applications with preliminary approval have not received final approval and an application for three or four new lots is under appeal.

The Zoning Administrator/Planning Coordinator's primary responsibility is the administration and enforcement of the zoning, subdivision, and septic regulations. This includes advising landowners and their representatives on issues relating to these regulations and assisting in the preparation of permit applications. Responsibilities also include providing technical support to the Planning Commission in preparing the Town Plan and regulations, maintaining the Norwich Geographic Information System (GIS), and maintaining the E911 Locatable Address System. Additionally I provide staff support to the Development Review Board.

Specific information on zoning, subdivision, and septic permit requirements for the Town of Norwich is listed on the inside back cover of this report. If you have any questions regarding zoning, septic permit regulations, GIS, or street addressing, please call or stop in.

Phil Dechert, Zoning Administrator/Planning Coordinator (649-1204)

Permit Activity

Zoning Permits	Development Review Board
New Homes9	Subdivisions10 (2 new lots)
Replacement Homes3	Boundary Line Adjustments3
Building Additions18	Site Plan Reviews1
Accessory Structures17	Septic Permits
Commercial1	Full Systems12
Cell Tower1	Partial System13

Interesting Articles from Past Town Meetings

TOWN MEETING:

SECOND TUESDAY OF APRIL, 1778

Article 15. Voted Capt. Joseph Hatch, Colonel Peter Olcott, Lieut. John Slafter pound keepers.

Article 16. Voted that each of the pound keepers yards shall be lawful pounds.

Article 17. Voted that the hogs in this town shall not run on the common.

Article 18. Voted that no sheep shall run on the common.

TOWN MEETING:

SECOND TUESDAY OF MARCH 1780

Article 2. Voted that any person that is not under the particular care of their parents and gives in a list* shall have liberty to vote in town meeting.

* From Mitford Mathews, *A Dictionary of Americanisms*:

“List - An enumeration or description of property subject to taxation.”

TOWN MEETING:

DECEMBER 21, 1780

Article 4. Voted that we will do everything in our power that a union of the whole of the Grants be established and maintained; but it is our choice & desire that the whole of the Grants be united in a separate state rather than be under the jurisdiction of the State of New Hampshire or any other...

TOWN MEETING:

SEPTEMBER 7, 1784

Discussion under Article 10. The following persons agreed to sweep the Meeting House in their turn; Maj. Burton for Sept., Maj. Brigham for Oct., Eleazar Brown for November, Capt. Hatch for December, Maj. Murdock for January, Capt. Gates for February...