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OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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TO: SELECTBOARD  
FROM: PETE WEBSTER, TOWN MANAGER  
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT  
DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2009

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**Budget**

I have continued to work on the budget, updating figures as they have changed. You will have an updated overall budget for the meeting next week. So far I think the process has gone well, and we have two responsible budgets in the works.

**Various Meetings**

I met with both Cheryl and Roberta to go over the final draft of the MD&A for the auditors, and you should have received that draft for your input. I think the audit is clear, clean, and an accurate depiction of our Town's financial position.

I met with the Norwich Energy Committee, Andy, and about 8-10 prospective solar installers at a site visit at Public Works. This meeting was to go over the specifics of a 237 KW solar farm being proposed for construction on Town property there and to answer any questions about the bids. This continues to be a complicated project, made more so by the failure to get a guaranteed feed-in-tariff rate going forward (through the State lottery) for the power to be generated. The Energy Committee will be keeping you up to date on this potential project.

I enrolled in a half-day session for Delinquent Tax Collectors put on by the League, and will have some recommendations coming out of that meeting for you to review. I think we can, and need to be, more aggressive as a Town in pressuring those delinquent accounts. One simple, yet very effective method, used almost universally by the other 42 attendees, is to publish the names of the delinquents and amounts owed in our annual Town Report. Your call, but that would be my recommendation. We are in the vast minority in this practice.

I had lunch with Democratic Gubernatorial candidate Matt Dunne, and a group of about 8 other business people and Upper Valley leaders, to discuss all of our concerns about the very serious issues facing all Vermont municipalities and businesses. I shared with him my thoughts on what the next governor should be focusing on—education funding reform, broadening the State's tax base (through universal connectivity of fiber-to-the-home), addressing the critical infrastructure needs of the State that have been left lagging, and partnering with the municipalities to make this a more attractive State for business and industry, while not neglecting the family farms—helping those struggling dairy farms to

branch into other forms of farming, where necessary. We are looking at a 25% increase in the education tax rate the next three years, the Unemployment Insurance Fund is about \$100 million underfunded, State road/bridge construction is almost \$200 million underfunded, the teachers' retirement fund (also woefully underfunded) is about to be shifted onto the backs of property tax payers from the general fund; and 50% of all teachers in the State will be eligible for retirement within the next five years. Health insurance costs are killing our smaller businesses (1-50 employees). The financial picture for Vermont has never been more dire.

### **Union Contract Negotiations**

The initial exchange of proposals has occurred between labor and management, but the first meeting scheduled thereafter for this past Monday had to be cancelled due to the death of the union negotiator's father. I can update you on these negotiations periodically as you wish, in Executive Session.

### **GUVSWD Board Meeting**

As you know, I am your alternate representative to this board, but am on the LAC (Landfill Advisory Committee) for the Solid Waste District, along with two others, Phil Swanson and Bob Stacey of Woodstock and Hartland, respectively. We have been meeting on the proposal from Interstate Waste Services to develop and manage our 40 acre landfill on the 190 acre parcel that was purchased years ago by the SWD, and you will hear more specifics about the project from both Fred Moody, the SWD director, and your representative, Brion McMullan on Wednesday. We've had a number of conference calls, meetings, and a site visit to the Moretown Landfill, currently being operated by IWS. This is a significant decision for the ten towns to make, a large investment going forward for the next 40-50 years which will determine how we approach our disposal of waste.

This was a shortened week due to the holidays, hence a shortened report.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Webster