



Peter B. Webster
Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Peter B. Webster, Town Manager

DATE: September 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Information for the Selectboard

This will be a somewhat abbreviated report, as this covers a slightly shortened time frame. I will be away the next two days at the fall meeting of the VTCMA (Vt. Town/City Managers' Association) meeting in Stratton, but look forward to our meeting next Wednesday.

Parsonage Proposal

The public let us hear their views loudly and clearly on this issue with yesterday's emphatic vote, so the Parsonage will be going on the general market for sale. I will be reconvening the meetings of the NORCAP Committee next week, moving the capital planning forward as rapidly as possible. We are waiting for the master site plan assessment on the DPW, which should be completed by mid-November. We have a little over \$10,300 in a Long Term Facility Study designated fund, and I would propose we tap that for the planning we had hoped to do for Police and Fire facilities had Article 3 been approved. The need for capital improvements for our emergency services has not gone away with the negative vote, and I will do what I can with the budget provided to come up with an affordable option that meets those departments' future needs.

GUVSWD

With the recent passage of the Solid Waste District \$875,000 bond, the board has been contemplating significant changes to its operating budget. I am on their Landfill Advisory Committee, along with Town Managers Bob Stacey from Hartland and Phil Swanson from Woodstock, and also the Bridgewater Selectboard Chairman, Nelson Lee. We are looking at serious cuts to that budget in view of the landfill development being put on indefinite hold until the economy rebounds, including the replacement of Fred Moody as full-time director with a very part-time (about 15 hours/week) director. Everything is on the table for that budget, including the possible sale of the house in Hartland that was purchased some 15 years ago and is their current office.

Park & Recreation—Huntley Field

The work crew from the Southeast State Correctional Facility is wrapping up their work on our 43 step “Stairway to Heaven” out at Huntley. The side railings are being installed today and tomorrow, Andy’s crew is doing the back-filling and final landscaping for that steep hill leading down from the upper parking lot to Field #1. The field leveling, compost spreading and rototilling is just about complete, and the hydro-seeding of this 4+ acre field should be done later this week or early next week. We will have snow fencing around a good portion to keep people off as the grass takes root, but we need adequate natural moisture for those first two critical weeks. This has been a highly successful and wonderfully feel-good project that the Town will enjoy for decades.

This past Monday Jill hosted a wonderful ‘volunteer appreciation’ cook-out at the pavilion for all her Council members and assorted volunteers. I stopped by briefly for a burger and a dog, and it was a very nice event for a great group.

FY 2012 Budget

As we enter the coming budget cycle, I will be sending out the annual letter to Department Heads giving some general outline of what we hope to accomplish. In looking back over the past five municipal budgets, I note that the FY 11 budget is only about a 2.8% increase over the FY 2007 budget in real dollars, and our actual tax rate during those five budgets has decreased by over 4%. This Town has been well served during those five budgets with the input of the Finance Committee, the Selectboard and the various Town Managers, not to mention the hard work of all Department Heads. This will be, once again, an extremely difficult budget process, as we have cut, cut, cut. We cannot continue to freeze salaries, take away merit bonuses and require employees to contribute more to their health insurance plans after moving them to a less expensive HD/HSA plan. Approximately one third of the \$360,000 budget is in salaries, so any guidelines that suggest a further freezing of Town employees’ salaries, or a percentage cut of ‘x’ percent for the total budget, will necessarily then become an ‘x plus’ percent cut from the balance of the budget.