

Annual Reports

of the
Town of Norwich, Vermont

Fiscal Year 2005
July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005

Part II: Town Boards, Commissions,
Committees and Departments

SELECTBOARD

In September 2004, after a lengthy search, we hired Steve Soares, the former Police Chief, as Town Manager. He has become familiar with the duties of that job and is becoming a true asset to the town. We thank him for taking on this job. In November he introduced to us Doug Robinson, the new Police Chief.

In March 2005 we adopted a Norwich town-specific plan regarding hazard mitigation. In April we adopted a capital assets plan so as to be in accordance with proper accounting procedures required under GASB 34. And in April we also approved a sewer ordinance in accordance with state requirements. In May we had the pleasure of meeting with Ian Harvey, a candidate for Eagle Scout, who wished to build, at his expense, two dugouts at the Huntley Meadows baseball field. We were pleased to give him the blessings of the Selectboard. In June we had a lively discussion with many members of the public who were opposed to a proposed junkyard ordinance. After listening to the public, the board rejected the ordinance. That month we also amended the street vendors (peddlers) ordinance to make it possible for youngsters to set up lemonade stands without having to acquire a vendor's license.

The Selectboard meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. We welcome all residents to our meetings. If you would like to receive electronic notices of meetings, agendas and minutes, please contact Nancy Kramer, manager assistant, at <manager-assistant@norwich.vt.us>.

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

TOWN MANAGER AND COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES

At the time of this writing, I have been Norwich Town Manager for a total of 17 months, including a four-month period as acting Town Manager. This report provides the highlights — personnel and projects — from FY'05:

Personnel: In 2004, as I transitioned from Police Chief to Town Manager, I promoted Douglas A. Robinson to Police Chief. Chief Robinson's promotion created a vacancy at the rank of sergeant in the Police Department, which was filled by Michael McGee, a veteran Hartford officer. Also, in the latter part of calendar 2004, Deborah Hall and I worked to hire a Town Manager's assistant to replace Tina Moses. Nancy Kramer was hired as my assistant in January 2005 and has proved to be a very positive influence at Tracy Hall. Finance Officer Roberta Robinson continues to play a lead role in moving Norwich toward new standards established by Governmental Accounting Standards Board (the GASB).

Projects: The bridge reconstruction on Route 132 crossing the Ompompanoosuc River was completed. We were forced into early replacement of a large culvert on Bragg Hill Road, but, fortunately, that one was on our schedule to be replaced. Recreation Director Jill Kearney led our employees to an award for being the "most improved" regarding state wellness program participation. The Corridor Project, designed to enhance the entrance to our community, is closer than ever to becoming a reality; it is very likely that this project will go to bid in the spring. Ian Harvey, a Norwich teen, completed one of the best projects I saw in town in fiscal 2005, i.e., the Huntley Fields baseball dugouts!

As Town Manager, it is my responsibility to act as the Collector of Delinquent Taxes. Taxes become delinquent if unpaid after the second payment, due in February. A warrant is issued by the Town Treasurer authorizing the collection of delinquent taxes along with an 8-percent penalty and 1-percent interest per month for the first three months and 1.5-

percent interest thereafter. A policy outlines the collection process, which includes payment applications, payment plans and tax sale procedures, if necessary.

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

Tax Year Summary for 2004 – 2005

Taxes billed:	\$10,488,394.90
Taxes collected during FY:	\$10,452,429.94
Taxes outstanding at close of FY:	\$35,964.96

Delinquent Tax Report

6/30/2004 balance:	\$92,341.14
04-05 delinquent taxes:	\$196,767.58
Subtotal:	\$289,108.72
Less delinquent taxes collected & abatements:	\$223,828.38

Balance – June 30, 2005: \$65,280.34

Taxes delinquent for FY 04/05	\$35,964.96
Taxes delinquent previous years	\$29,315.38
Total	\$65,280.34

Delinquent taxes as of December 31, 2005 \$22,735.68

TOWN CLERK

This year the Town Clerk's Office began to see changes in the election laws to conform to the Help America Vote Act. One of the first changes was for the state to implement a statewide checklist, and for each voter to have a personal ID number. For new voters, we will be using your Vermont driver's license number or a personal ID number issued from the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles. If you do not have either of these, we will have to use the last four digits of your Social Security number. We must have one of the above in order to place you on the voter checklist. The statewide checklist will be fully operational in January 2006. Another change to take place by January 2006 is a new system in which the blind and visually impaired person can vote by using specialized software that we can dial into and allow the voters to listen (as many times as they would like) to the ballot and cast their votes by using the keypad on the phone. This will be available for state and federal elections, and will not be available at the local level.

This year we have seen a slowdown in the amount of documents recorded in our office. Compared to last year, when we recorded 7,032 pages in the Land Records, this year we have recorded 4,271 pages in the Land Records, a decrease of 2,761 pages recorded.

In our second year of processing passports, we have processed 20. We expect to see an increase in the coming years. Also in 2005 we have processed 173 motor vehicles renewals, licensed 553 dogs and sold 423 Fish & 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 7:00 p.m. If you have any questions or need help, please do not hesitate to ask.

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

Vital Records for 2005

As recorded by the Town Clerk's Office January 1 to December 31, 2005

Births

There were no births recorded in the Town Clerk's Office for 2005.

Deaths

John McCormick
W. Cutting Johnson
Jeanne Hatch
Raymond C. Gray
Konrad Von Moltke
Harvey Knight
Peter C. Badgley

John P. Brown Jr.
John Baumgarten
Bonnie C. Cassidy
Charles Armstrong
Wesley H. Cook
Shirley Owen

Marriages

Brian Timothy Tatum
Gerald William Doherty
Richard Bradley Ferrell
Jeffrey Scott McClellan
Geary Edward Mills
Andrew Karl Seaman
Theodore Alan Pine
Richard Scull Biddle
James R. Studebaker
Casey Vandenoever
David Vincent Carson
Sean Paul Childs
Michael Myungho Lee
Michael Woodliffe Kramer
Joshua David Kantrowitz
Robert Andrew Snyder
Tabert Alan Julius
Nathaniel Tussing Greene
Guy Meirson
Jeffrey Charles Bradley
Howard D. Fraser
Sean Ryan Conway
Paul Fierro Fruchbom
Richard Asare
Christopher Ryan Geraghty
Gunnard Alan Nelson Jr.
Eric Peter Batson

Glaucia Costa Alves
Robyn Leigh Ostrander
Melanie Adams Cash
Jessica Anne Reed
Melissa Lynn Jones
Katharine G. Evans
Susan Mary Murphy
Jo Moody Harvey
Leah E. Cloud
Julia Beck Hoggson
Lori Anne Johnson
Nichole A. Hodgdon
Fuyuki Hirashima
Veronique M. Landry
Cornelia A. Hasenfuss
Erin Jacobsen
Karen Marie Brislin
Lora Lynn Nutbrown
Natalie Rebecca Melzer
Julie Anne Silva
Jean Evelyn Salo
Margaret L. Janeway
Jessica Leigh Day
Rebecca Ashley
Elizabeth Suzanne Daigle
Marilyn C. Austin
Lois Ann Mitchell

Civil Unions

Lisanne Cape Dorion
Darlene Marie LaVine
Terri Lynn Crane
Jennifer Ellen O'Flaherty

Darlene Kilmer Beck
Donna Marie Comeau
Mary Elizabeth Houde
Elizabeth Jamie Ryan

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

The Norwich Affordable Housing Committee is charged with recommending actions necessary to ensure that a continuum of housing stock is available in Norwich.

Members of the committee met with town, state and regional commissions, committees, boards, coalitions and housing entities to work toward adding affordable housing in Norwich. The committee made recommendations to the Planning Commission to ensure that the new zoning regulations promote affordable housing as defined in the Affordable Housing Committee Report of 2002. The committee continued to pursue every realistic location for adding some new mixed housing to Norwich. The committee also worked in collaboration with other town and local entities to pool finances and resources to add and maintain existing affordable housing in Norwich.

This year the committee would especially like to thank the town for providing, by town-wide vote, funds available for three years (to be returned to the town after the three years). The availability of town funds makes an enormous difference to housing organizations and housing finance agencies. 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, joined with the funds and Selectboard backing should help further the mission of the committee.

Members of the committee continue to 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.

Creigh Moffatt, Chair (649-5533)

AUDITORS

The town's three elected auditors are statutory officials whose principal responsibility is to prepare the annual Town Report for residents. 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 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, 2004, and June 30, 2005, the Board of Abatement heard five 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 30 appeals from assessment decisions of the Board of Listers, making it a fairly busy season.

Nancy H. Dean, Chair (649-1324)

CEMETERY COMMISSION

The commission oversaw the following work in FY'05: regular maintenance at the cemeteries at New Boston, Waterman Hill, Fairview and Hillside; trimming and clearing of brush at the White Cemetery (on Hogback). In the Norwich portion of the Union Village Cemetery 400 stones were cleaned and straightened. At the cemetery on Meeting House Hill, all stones were cleaned.

Work on the newer part (lower east) of Hillside Cemetery, our largest and currently used burial ground, still awaits attention. Last year's report mentioned plans for a professional survey and engineering work. Some of that was accomplished but not enough to prepare the new section for burials.

As for growth, 11 double lots (of which one is a cremation lot) have been sold at Hillside. No single lots were bought during the year.

This year's income (\$2,876.85) from the Woodworth Fund was below that of the preceding year (\$4,599.62). Perpetual-care interest income has improved. The report of the Trustees of Public Funds records the status of our cemetery funds.

Fred Spaulding, Chair (649-1121)

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

In FY'05 the Norwich Conservation Commission continued water-quality testing in the town's streams. Our testing program this year was made possible by a generous partnership grant from the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, for which the Conservation Commission expresses its thanks. Generally, the water quality was good, although there were some unexplainable spikes of E. coli in September. These are snapshot samples and do not yet indicate a systemic problem. Testing will continue in 2006. Water quality data can be found at www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/cfm/volmon/results.cfm?id=>.

The Conservation Commission has also started environmental evaluations to aid the Development Review Board with its work. In 2005 the Conservation Commission signed a contract with Arrowwood Environmental to map vernal pools in town starting in 2006. A goal of the project is to encourage community participation and work with landowners in getting their permission to visit their lands and map the pools.

The new multi-use trail on Parcel 5 off Beaver Meadow Road is essentially complete and ski-able. Fine-tuning of the signage and the parking lot will continue in 2006.

The commission received a \$2,500 grant from the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to help cover the cost of a "Keeping Track" program. This program will train local people, including some Conservation Commissioners, to thoroughly understand the tracking, sign, mating, denning habits and habitat of six focal species.

Lee Michaelides, Secretary (649-2103)

CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT 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. In spring 2005, after a period of inactivity, the corridor project started moving quickly. We re-established the Corridor Steering Committee; secured additional professional consultant services; solicited grants for construction funding; and began working through a myriad of design and permitting issues. At this time we have addressed all Vermont Agency of Transportation requirements and have submitted our final design plans for its review. If final plans are approved, we will coordinate our work with town officials and then proceed to construction.

This project is 80-percent paid by Federal Highway Administration and Vermont Agency of Transportation grants. In addition to that funding, there are a multitude of detailed federal and state regulations the town must follow. The time and effort involved in each project step presents numerous challenges and lengthy review periods. So I will continue to ask for the patience and support of Norwich residents as we labor forward.

In addition to the support and guidance from the Selectboard, a unique asset has been our Corridor Steering Committee, which includes Neil Fulton, resident; Phil Dechert, Norwich zoning administrator; Andy Hodgdon, Norwich highway foreman; and Chuck Wise, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission representative. Finally, Bob White (and his colleagues at SVE Associates) has been essential in moving forward with design and permitting. Bob receives project funding, but much of his time is volunteered to the town.

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

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

The Development Review Board (DRB) has completed its second year. It was created to merge the Zoning Board of Adjustment with the subdivision and site plan review functions of the Planning Commission. There are seven members with three alternates, all appointed by the Selectboard. The DRB meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month and all meetings are open to the public.

The board has heard more than 25 applications this year, several with multiple public hearings. The decisions are public documents filed in the Town Clerk’s office. Since the DRB must apply the adopted regulations literally, there has been continuing discussion between the Planning Commission and DRB to clarify and improve these regulations. An ad hoc committee consisting of members of the DRB and Planning and Conservation Commissions is considering methods to preserve open space.

When a new application is received, a hearing date is set and this is both posted on the town notice board and advertised in the *Valley News*. However, following standard practice, the hearing may be continued to a specific date and time in the future. If you are following a particular application, you should watch for DRB agendas, ask to be placed on the e-mail list or call the zoning administrator for information.

Watt Alexander, Chair (649-3144)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management's responsibility is to prepare for and coordinate response to situations that may demand extraordinary action. In the past, floods, other types of storms, fires and spills of hazardous materials have been Emergency Management's concern. Terrorism now joins the list.

Day-to-day preparations occur within each town department, with training and material stockpiling overseen by department heads and the Town Manager. Plans exist for activation of an emergency operations center, with various scenarios and responses to them outlined within the plan. Cooperation with other towns as well as state and federal organizations has been discussed and is included in our plans. Private organizations, not the least of which is the Red Cross, have agreed to work with us.

Emergency power is provided for vital services from public and private sources. The Town Manager is by statute the director of Emergency Management. He will be assisted by the Fire Chief and all other department heads as well as private citizens.

Charles Hodgdon, Emergency Management Coordinator (649-1659)

ENERGY COMMITTEE

During FY'05 the Norwich Energy Committee (NEC) conducted the following activities:

- Implemented a successful biodiesel pilot test in a town vehicle with road commissioner Andy Hodgdon with fuel donated by the energy committee. This led to the installation of a separate storage tank for biodiesel at the town garage to further expand its use in other vehicles.
- Facilitated a test of B20 blend (80-percent petroleum, 20-percent biodiesel) in a school bus in the spring of 2005.
- Arranged for an energy audit of the Marion Cross School (MCS) by Jon Sturges of the School Energy Management Program of the Vermont Superintendents Association and Sheryl Graves of Efficiency Vermont. Together they developed recommendations for lighting upgrades that are eligible for a state subsidy.
- Developed a proposal for installation of photovoltaic panels at the MCS and presented it to Principal Rob Edson and the school board. Jon Sturges analyzed the proposal and concluded that it would also be eligible for state subsidy when combined with the lighting upgrades.
- Worked with Jon Sturges and Jeff Forward of the Biomass Energy Resource Center to explore the possibility of installing a wood chip boiler at the MCS, possibly linked also to Tracy Hall and other buildings in the village. Discussed the concept with Rob Edson and Town Manager Steve Soares.
- Distributed materials on global warming, compact fluorescent lighting, biodiesel, electricity consumption, and home energy-saving tips.
- Sponsored Bike-to-School Day for MCS students in September and May, with 125 to 150 participating in each.
- Ongoing experimentation with 100-percent biodiesel for home heating and summer and winter driving.

For more information, contact me at 649-2857 or <bercress@sover.net> or Ames Byrd at 649-3905 or <ames.byrd@valley.net>.

Alan Berolzheimer, Chair (649-2857)

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. Interested members of the public are welcome at all Finance Committee meetings and frequently contribute to discussions. During the past year, at the request of the Selectboard, the Finance Committee began a series of reviews of town departments, beginning with the Police Department. Residents take note: Eligibility for the "income-sensitive" provisions of Vermont school-funding law was expanded on January 1, 2006. Resident homeowners with household income up to \$85,000 are now fully eligible for a prebate check from the state tax department, reducing net school tax on your principal residence to about 3 percent of household income. "Household income" is often less than the IRS's "adjusted gross income," so the Finance Committee urges homeowners who have not used this program to review the simple forms included in the state income tax booklet. We are always glad to assist with questions.

Irv Thomae, Chair (649-5617)

FINANCE OFFICE

The Finance Office is responsible for all accounting functions for the town, including current and delinquent tax collection, payroll and accounts payable and financial reporting for/to all departments. A large project this year was compiling information about fixed assets for conversion to the GASB34 financial statement format, now required by towns with revenues of less than \$10 million. Fixed assets are property and improvements, vehicles and mobile equipment and equipment used by departments with a minimum value of \$5,000. Road infrastructure such as bridges and paving is also included as fixed assets, but reporting is required only for major reconstruction or new acquisitions as of June 2004 (however, retroactive reporting is encouraged). As a result of compiling these data, fixed assets and depreciation are now included in the financial statements of the Town of Norwich. The 2004 tax year was also the first year of implementing Act 68 and Act 76, regarding the tax classification system passed by the Vermont Legislature. A key component of this system is the filing of form HS-131 with the Vermont Tax Department. This form needs to be filed each year by April 15. Every property on the Grand List is assumed to be non-residential, until the information from the declaration is downloaded from the state, changing it to a homestead property. During the 2004 tax year there were 14 amended tax bills sent due to the late filing of HS-131. This resulted in a 1-percent penalty of the education tax to these individuals. This money is not kept by the town, it is additional school tax. For the 2005 tax year, we have sent out more than 60 amended tax bills so far. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of filing the HS-131 form by April 15 each year to avoid incurring a penalty on your taxes and to be taxed at the correct amount. These forms can be found in the Vermont Income Tax Booklet or online at <www.vermont.gov>.

Roberta Robinson, Finance Officer (649-0122)

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The 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 have had a 62-percent increase in fire/rescue calls in the last four years. We had 12 regular fire/rescue training, nine regular emergency medical training and 18 special training drills this year 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. We currently have 32 active members, with 10 members trained at the Firefighter I level, two at the Firefighter II level, one at the Fire Officer I level, 17 at the EMT-B level and two at the EMT-I level. Two members are currently in training at the Firefighter I level. We continue to maintain an Insurance Services Office Public Protection Classification of 4, which is one of the highest in the area.

A new fire/rescue pumper (Engine 1) has arrived and is in service. This new pumper has increased our fire and rescue operational efficiency. A washer/extractor has been installed to facilitate proper washing and decontamination of fire turnout gear and EMT personal protective equipment to meet OSHA and NFPA standards. New improved firefighter turnout gear has been issued to all active firefighters, improving personnel protection and safety. Our most pressing need is to recruit and train new members.

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

Fire Report

Type	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05
Structure	6	11	7	11	10	9	8	6
Auto	12	17	16	18	20	33	32	43
Wildfire	5	5	2	5	5	1	5	3
CO Detector	5	0	1	2	1	2	3	4
False Call	10	15	9	14	10	19	16	40
Mutual Aid	3	4	6	3	8	4	13	5
Other	4	4	12	15	11	17	22	4
Arson ¹	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Medical					15	79	94	117
TOTAL	45	56	53	68	80	164	193	222

¹ Not included in total

2004-05 Firefighters and FAST Squad

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***, James Faughnan*, Matt Herbert**, Douglas Hoffman**, Kim Wood-Hoffman**, Michael Hooper-Goetinck**, Regina Hubbard***, Brian Johnson*, Nancy LaRowe*** (Fire Warden), John Lawe**, David LeBrun*, Peter McCormack*, Bonnie Munday**, Robin Rice**, Pete Schwab* (Lieutenant), Matt Swett*, Lloyd Tebbetts* (Assistant Chief), Chris Thayer***, Warren Thayer*, Andy Vinopal *** (Captain)

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

FIRE WARDEN

The Norwich Forest Fire Warden regulates open burning within the town by issuing burn permits, educating residents in proper burning practices and suppressing any wildland fires with the assistance of the Fire Department. More than 300 burn permits were issued in 2005, making it a very busy year for open burning.

Spring is a particularly busy time for open burning. Many people feel it is the perfect time to clean up the yard after the long winter. Last spring was quite dry and windy, making burning conditions unsafe at certain times. This is why it is very important for permits to be obtained before starting a burn. By monitoring local and regional fire conditions we can determine if it is safe to have an open burn in Norwich.

Burn permits 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 read the permit carefully, follow the safe-burning instructions on the back of the permit and feel free to call with any questions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Nancy LaRowe, Fire Warden (649-8807)

HEALTH OFFICER

The Health Officer and Deputy Health Officer are responsible for public health in the community. This includes dealing with hazards such as surfacing sewage, 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 has bitten a human. There is a mandatory 10-day confinement of the dog and the H.O. checks that the dog remains healthy.

This year we have added eastern equine encephalitis to West Nile virus as mosquito-transmitted diseases. The best way to protect both adults and children is to cover bare skin with clothing both early morning and evening and to use an effective insect repellent.

For many years the medical profession has been puzzled about the incidence of lung cancer in non-smokers. Recent studies in the United States and Europe have conclusively shown that exposure to radon, a colorless, odorless radioactive gas, is frequently the cause. Vermonters may be at greater risk due to the widespread granite deposits. Testing is easy — several commercial labs or the Vermont Department of Health can advise you. If high radon levels are detected special venting can eliminate this health hazard. Please consider a radon test this year.

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

John E. Lawe, M.D., Health Officer (649-1585);
Bonnie Munday, Deputy Health Officer (649-1419)

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The goal of the Highway Department is to provide safe and convenient roadways throughout the year. We strive to meet the needs and demands of an active and growing community. This year we have completed many important projects, which have addressed some long-standing issues.

A total replacement of the cement box culvert at the intersection of Bragg Hill and Goddard Road was done during the summer of 2005. This addressed safety issues at this location. This project was listed on the town's all-hazard-mitigation plan. Partial funding for this box culvert replacement was obtained through the Vermont AOT Bridge Grant Program. Along with the box culvert project, work was done to address long-standing drainage issues and safety problems on the first hill on Goddard Road. This work was partially funded through a Local Roads Grant.

In conjunction with the Norwich Water Department, the Highway Department completed a drainage project on Main Street. This project included the installation of two new catch basins and new pipe. The Highway Department plans to extend this drainage system next year. Granite curbing was extended in front of the Norwich Library to better utilize parking space at this location. A total bridge rehab was done on Bridge 46 on Route 132. The old bridge at this location was in very poor condition. We received partial funding for this from the state and federal transportation agencies.

We continue our extensive culvert replacement program, with 36 culvert installations completed during the summer of 2005. We have completed 104 new culvert installations in the past four years and have done all of the related ditching.

The Norwich Highway Department has collaborated with other town departments throughout the year on various projects. Department-to-department cooperation continues to be excellent.

We have obtained traffic counts on selected town roads and streets from Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. These numbers reflect very high commuter-based traffic volumes. Very few other small towns have such traffic pressures. This has significant implications for road maintenance. Many of these roads will demand continued town investment.

The following is a list of these traffic counts:

- Turnpike Road: 2,347, daily average; 856,655 per year
- New Boston Road: 715, daily average; 260,975 per year
- Main Street, 8,930, daily average; 3,259,450 per year
- Beaver Meadow Road: 2,453, daily average; 895,345 per year
- Willey Hill: 717, daily average; 261,705 per year
- Goodrich Four Corners: 1,627, daily average; 593,855 per year
- Union Village Road: 2,277, daily average; 831,105 per year
- Route 132: 736, daily average; 268,640 per year
- Bragg Hill Road: 712.8, daily average; 260,172 per year
- Montshire Drive: 600, daily average; 219,000 per year
- Elm Street: 1,400, daily average; 511,000 per year
- Carpenter Street: 1,110, daily average; 401,500 per year

Andy Hodgdon, Highway Administrator (649-2209)

Road Crew: Neal Rich, John Thorp, Gary Durkee, Robert Hodge, Albert Lewellyn and David Kendall

LISTERS

During the preparation of the 2005 Norwich Grand List, the Norwich Listers and Norwich Assessor became aware that there were two types of errors that had been made during the previous year's town-wide reappraisal. The first was not accounting for site improvements and the second concerned the calculation of the square footage in some residential properties. Although these errors did not occur for all properties, they did show up often enough that the listers and assessor reviewed every developed residential property in Norwich and made corrections where necessary.

This made the Grand List more accurate and equitable and raised by 1 percent the Norwich Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) as determined by the Vermont Department of Taxes. This in turn drops both the town's Non-Residential Education Tax Rate for FY'07 (2007) as well as the Homestead Education Tax Rate, both of which are dependent on the CLA (see formula below that the state uses to determine these rates).

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Non-Residential Tax Rate} &= N \div \text{CLA} \\ \text{Homestead Tax Rate} &= (H \div \text{CLA}) \times (E \div B)\end{aligned}$$

Where:

1. N is the base Non-Residential Tax rate that will be set by the Vermont Legislature
2. H is the base Homestead Tax rate that will be set by the Vermont Legislature
3. E is the education spending per pupil that the Norwich voters set when they approve the school budgets
4. B is the base amount (formerly called the block grant) that will be set by the Vermont Legislature.

The Norwich Listers do not have control over the CLA, but by keeping the Grand List accurate and current the increases in the education tax rates, which make up nearly 80 percent of our total tax rate, will be kept to a minimum.

The Norwich Listers and Norwich Assessor will continue to assess new construction annually as well as all improvements, with or without zoning permits. They will also review real estate sales as they compare to the sold properties' listed values and be ready to adjust the database by categories of properties or the entire Grand List so a reappraisal of the whole town can be made efficiently every few years.

If you own the home that you live in, you must file a Homestead Declaration (form HS-131 in the Vermont tax booklet or online at <www.vermont.gov>) by April 15, 2006. If you are late and the state tax department determines that you should have filed, you will be subject to a 1-percent penalty.

Richard H. Blacklow and Dennis M. Kaufman, Listers (649-1116);
Stephen R. Wheelock, Assessor

GRAND LIST

Total Taxable Property (2004 Education Grand List).....\$623,379,434
 One percent (1%) of Total Grand List.....6,233,794

Real Estate Exemptions by Vote

Norwich Fire District.....40,000
 Beaver Meadow Chapel Association.....109,200
 Root District Game Club.....254,900
 University Grange Inc. # 34.....351,500

Real Estate Exemptions by Agreement

Norwich Housing Corp.....1,546,600

Real Estate Exemptions by Statute

Veterans, Statutory (6).....120,000
 Child Care Center Inc.....800,900
 Montshire Museum of Science.....5,044,100
 Norwich Historical Society.....470,400
 Norwich Nursery School.....152,700
 The Family Place.....651,600
 Sands Taylor and Wood Co. (Vermont Public Radio).....150,000
 Andrew C. & Margaret R. Sigler Foundation.....2,017,100
Total, Real Estate Exemptions.....9,406,800

Breakdown of Grand List

R-1 - Residence with under 6A of Land (766).....290,382,100
 R-2 - Residence with 6A of land or over (461).....257,538,196
 MH - Mobile Home with or without land (15).....1,921,122
 C - Commercial Properties (46).....28,941,800
 CA - Commercial Apartments (6).....3,414,100
 UE - Utilities Electric (4).....5,338,300
 UO - Utilities Other (1).....156,100
 F - Farms (12).....7,764,919
 Other (39).....7,698,500
 M - Miscellaneous (166).....19,349,697
 Cable (Education Grand List only).....874,600

Land Use Appraisal Program

Number of parcels enrolled in program.....127
 Number of acres in program.....12,055.96
 Exempt value of enrolled property.....16,169,266

Municipal Grand List as of:

31 December 2002.....332,006,393
 31 December 2003.....339,041,736
 31 December 2004.....Town-wide reappraisal.....\$583,060,623
31 December 2005.....\$622,504,834

MILTON FRYE NATURE AREA COMMITTEE

The town nature area is a 35-acre tract next to the Marion Cross School. Given its central location, its trails receive steady daily use by hikers, teachers and students. Countless informal outdoor education classes are held on the property throughout the school year, with topics including nature study, environmental consciousness and orienteering.

During the past year the committee worked to fulfill its mission as steward of the property—protecting it while maximizing its use as an educational and recreational resource. This spring’s annual visit and assessment by the Upper Valley Land Trust again found management to be in order. Committee members finished work on the Outer Loop Trail, which was laid out last year to protect animal habitats while making the trail less steep and easier to use by hikers and cross-country skiers. We also did a re-route of a section of trail to make it safer. The Upper Valley Trails Alliance now has all our trails on its website, at <www.uvtrails.org/trails>.

The year’s events again included a mushroom walk with Faith Hunt, a field trip with Alcott Smith to learn about animal tracks, several bird walks (including four for schoolchildren) led by George Clark, and a trails work day. Invasive species such as buckthorn, Japanese barberry, Norway maple and honeysuckle continue to drive us nearly to distraction. We love volunteers!

Warren Thayer, Chair (649-3737)

PLANNING COMMISSION

In this report year we continued working on a revision of the zoning regulations and started the process of updating the Town Plan. A well-attended public workshop in January 2005 to review draft zoning regulations brought forth many constructive comments that have since been incorporated in an updated draft. At the end of April the Planning Commission sponsored a public workshop in the form of a “charrette” to investigate the feasibility of higher-density mixed-use districts in Norwich. The three-day charrette, organized by Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, was well attended and resulted in planning and design guidelines that may be incorporated in the Town Plan and zoning regulations.

The process of updating the Town Plan began with a public opinion survey written by the Planning Commission members with assistance from the TRORC. The survey was mailed to all Norwich residents and property owners in October 2005. Results will be available early in 2006. The town received a \$9,000 Municipal Planning Grant for updating the Town Plan.

The Planning Commission held joint meetings with both the Selectboard and the Development Review Board.

The commission currently meets every second and fourth Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Minutes are available on the town website.

Daniel Johnson, Chair (649-5533)

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Norwich Police Department is quickly becoming a model agency for other departments of similar size throughout the area. We are dedicated in our efforts to preserve and strengthen our community bonds through exceptional service with honesty, compassion and integrity. The dedication and sacrifices made by our members exemplify our commitment to the community.

The Police Department has seen several changes over the last year in our effort to become a model department. Officers Roger Berry and Robert Brittner resigned and were replaced, respectively, by Officers Larry Lamphere and Joseph Temple, who both bring several years of law enforcement experience. The department continues its search to fill one vacancy.

Incidents of crimes and complaints have remained relatively stable, even though surrounding communities have seen increases. This is directly related to community involvement as well as police presence.

I thank every member of the Police Department for their continuous efforts and dedication to the citizens of Norwich. I thank the citizens and businesses of Norwich for their continued support, without which we could not have progressed to the level we have.

Douglas A. Robinson, Chief (649-1460)

Roster: Sgt. Michael McGee, Ofc. Larry Lamphere, Ofc. Jim Lanctot, Ofc. Cheri Saltis, Ofc. Joseph Temple, Anita Ferry (Administrative Assistant)

Norwich Police Department Statistics 2004-2005

911 Hangup.....	26	Parking Problem.....	78
ATV Incident.....	5	Phone Problem.....	2
Abandoned Vehicle.....	5	Pornography.....	1
Accidents.....	120	Probation Violation.....	1
Agency Assist.....	138	Property Check.....	1,683
Alarm.....	58	Public Speaking.....	2
Alcohol Offense.....	4	Restraining Order.....	1
Animal Complaint.....	72	Safety Hazard.....	4
Assault.....	3	Search Warrant.....	1
Bad Check.....	11	Stalking.....	1
Burglary.....	6	Suicide Attempt.....	1
Citizen Assist.....	57	Suspicious.....	95
Citizen Dispute.....	8	Theft.....	18
Custodial Interference.....	1	Threatening.....	7
Deliver Message.....	2	Traffic Citation.....	543
DLS.....	4	Traffic Hazard.....	29
Drugs.....	4	Traffic Stop - Other.....	159
DUI.....	11	Traffic Warning.....	218
Family Fight.....	6	Traffic Warning Verbal.....	288
Fireworks.....	4	Trespassing.....	14
Found Property.....	14	Unlawful Mischief.....	2
Fraud.....	7	Unsecure Premises.....	15
Illegal Burn.....	1	Vandalism.....	9
Juvenile Problem.....	3	Vehicle Unlock.....	25
Littering.....	3	VIN.....	80
Lost Property.....	6	Wanted Person.....	1
Missing Person.....	2	Welfare.....	17
Motor Vehicle Complaint.....	56	Total.....	3,946
Noise Disturbance.....	14		

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Norwich Recreation Council is made up of community volunteers who actively support and advise the Recreation Director, and so aid in running the department. Our mission is to offer a variety of recreational activities to residents, catering to varied tastes and interests. Our youth program provides offerings for kindergarten through sixth grade. 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 in organizing and supporting community events to help foster and maintain connectivity among residents. Council members, volunteers and local businesses help us run a large percentage of our programs and events.

The Recreation Department budget is different than most in that we generate revenue through many of our offerings. Although our budget generally goes up slightly each year, we try to have a corresponding rise in our revenue to balance it. A goal is to keep the net cost to the town under \$25,000 (the town contribution was under \$11,000 for FY'05). The department also has a Facilities Improvement Fund into which philanthropists can donate tax-deductible dollars to be used specifically for beautifying our town recreation areas. This is separate from the annual town budget, so projects completed using this fund don't impact taxes in any way. The Huntley Meadow Fields Project and the installation of new stone stairs are two examples of what we were able to accomplish this year through this fund. The fundraising effort for the Huntley fields project, spearheaded by Bruce "Buff" McLaughry, allowed us to move forward with this project without any burden on taxpayers, and we thank all who donated and contributed to its success. We also thank the Norwich Women's Club for a partial grant toward the stairs and railing.

The Recreation Department provides a lifeguard during summer afternoons at the pool and cares for the swimming area, Barrett Meadow and the Huntley Meadow fields, tennis courts and playground area. The Norwich pool/dam received a major upgrade this summer to ensure its future stability. Coordinating with the Highway Department and Town Manager, we also altered the Huntley Meadow entrance/exit for safety purposes and expanded the upper parking area to maximize spaces with minimal impact on the rest of the area.

We were thrilled to have the addition of substantial new baseball dugouts built by Ian Harvey as an Eagle Scout venture. Ian managed the whole project, through private donations and countless hours of volunteer labor. Thanks also to Mark Harvey for his involvement in overseeing the project. We have been extremely fortunate to have many local individuals willing to donate so much time, effort and dollars toward improving our facilities and programs.

Jill Kearney, Director (649-3040)

Recreation Council: Doug Kennedy (President), Kathy Menard (Secretary), Geoffrey Vitt (school board liaison), Mary Bender, Leslie Baker-Brown, Ann Greenwald, Kate Halsey, Bernard Haskell, Hugh Huizenga, Kate Robinson, Eric Sachsse and John Trautlein

SENIOR ACTION COUNCIL

The Norwich Senior Action Council consists of seven members appointed by the Selectboard. Our main purpose is the coordination with the Bugbee Center in White River Junction of the home-delivered meals program (Meals on Wheels). We have a volunteer for each day of the week to drive and staff the office of the senior housing, from 11 a.m. to noon, weekdays. Anyone may call at this time with questions about seniors.

We also supply subscriptions to the *Valley News* and the *Spectator* to residents of the senior housing. The Bugbee Center requests a fee every year for the meals and other services. Currently we have only two people receiving meals, but we are sure this number will go up in the future.

Martha Drake, Chair (649-1301)

SEWER COMMITTEE

The Norwich Selectboard in August 2003 formed a committee of residents to investigate the environmental effects of the present wastewater handling system, determine whether a municipal sewage system was needed and estimate the cost of such a system. The committee was also asked to attempt to determine the effect a sewage system might have on development in Norwich and the effect of that development on the quality of life in the town.

The committee's work included consultations with State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources officials, discussions with neighboring towns regarding the feasibility and cost of connecting Norwich sewer lines to their sewage plants, identification and evaluation of alternative in-ground community septic systems, and input from a professional engineer in estimating the cost to the town of various options for waste water disposal.

On June 23, 2005, the final report was issued. The Selectboard at its July 13, 2005, meeting accepted the report and dismissed the committee. At the August 24, 2005, Selectboard meeting a public discussion of the report was held.

The report is available on-line or from the Town Clerk's office.

Lynn S. McGrew, Chair (649-5163)

TRANSFER STATION

Although many of you already know us at the Transfer Station, the staff consists of lead attendant Judy Trussell, Ron "Bob" Trussell and John Wight. We would like to remind everyone that the Transfer Station is open Wednesday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. We are still selling trash cards at the Transfer Station by check only.

Many of you have asked what the cement blocks are for; we are looking into some changes at the Transfer Station that would include a second ramp. We are also reviewing the purchase of a replacement compactor and replacing or renovating the staff building.

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. Working closely with Andy Hodgdon and the Town Highway Department, we continue to improve our proactive approach of trimming and improving the treescape on roads of Norwich. We also continue to further develop our project to make excess hardwood cut in Norwich available to needy people in the Upper Valley. In fiscal year 2005 helpful volunteers delivered fuel to many people, enabling them to get through a tough winter. Andy Hodgdon and his crew helped tremendously in hauling wood up to our site off Beaver Meadow Road. We continue to work with LISTEN and SEVCA to identify people who need the fuel. We need volunteers to help cut, split and deliver the wood and need 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 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 three-year terms. 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 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.

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

WATERSHED LAND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The Watershed Land Management Council's mission is to manage the recreation and timber activities on Fire District land, which is composed of six different parcels totaling 917 acres. 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. All proceeds gained from timber harvests are reinvested in the land itself.

Last winter the council managed a timber harvest on Parcel 5. This is a 100-acre parcel located 1.5 miles beyond the town pool on Beaver Meadow Road. The harvest, which was done in close coordination with the town's tree warden, concentrated on thinning portions of the parcel that had not been treated in several years. The harvest was also done in close coordination with John Morton, a sport trail designer from Thetford who laid out a 5k trail for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and other non-motorized recreational activities. This past summer and fall members of the council and trails committee worked for 12 weeks with a four-person crew from the Student Conservation Association to improve the treadway. The trails project was funded by a grant from the Vermont Recreational Trails Grant Program, the Norwich Women's Club, private donors and revenues from earlier timber harvest. As of November the trail was nearly complete.

Clay Adams, Chair (649-8635)

ZONING & PLANNING OFFICE

Development in Norwich, as measured by 13 permit applications for new homes, was more than that of the previous two years. Subdivision applications were the same as last year (nine), but only six new lots were created because some applications were denied. The Zoning Administrator/Planning Coordinator’s primary responsibility is the administration and enforcement of the zoning, subdivision and septic regulations, which includes advising landowners and their representatives on issues relating to these regulations and assisting them in the preparation of applications. Responsibilities also include providing technical support to the Planning Commission, maintaining the Norwich Geographic Information System (GIS) and maintaining the 911 Locatable Address System. Additionally, I provide staff support to the Development Review Board. Grants awarded this year include a \$9,000 Municipal Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs for technical assistance in starting a new town plan.

Information on zoning, subdivision and septic permit requirements for 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 FY’05

Zoning Permits		Boundary Line Adjustments	6
New Homes	13	Site Plan Reviews	2
Replacement Homes	3	Planned Residential Dev.	1
Home Occupations	0	Variances	1
Building Additions	30	Conditional Use	1
Accessory Structures	19	Appeals	2
Commercial Additions	3		
Agricultural Buildings	3	Septic Permits	
		Full System	12
		Partial System	13
Development Review Board			
Subdivisions	9 (6 new lots)		