

## Report of the Board of Selectmen

The year 2020 provided significant challenges for the Board of Selectman, Department Heads and the Town Administrator who have worked hard throughout the year to meet the Town's needs during the ongoing COVID pandemic and while at the same time operating within the Town's budget. The Board of Selectmen wishes to thank everyone who makes it possible: elected and appointed officials, Department Heads and employees and the ever-present volunteers. Thank you for all your service and commitment to the Town of Fremont.

In March, Gene Cordes was re-elected to the Board of Selectmen for a three-year term. The current Board continues to be very dedicated and collectively has many years of experience in Town official capacities.



Events that typically occur within the year did not occur because of the pandemic. The Board did make the annual Town Report presentation to Jack Downing in his home in January (Photo courtesy of Theresa Blades).

Cancelled events included the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony at the Village Cemetery, Veterans Day Observance and the Wreaths Across America Ceremony at

the Fremont Town Hall. We continue remember and honor our past and present military services members and we look forward to when these events are able to occur in the future. As a community we are thankful and respectful of the work and sacrifice of all who put themselves in harm's way for our safety and protection. This includes our Police and Fire / EMS Departments.

Accomplishments in 2020 included:

- We got through the 9 months of COVID. This was a new and learning experience for everyone.
- The deceleration lane entering Black Rocks Village was completed by using the developer's performance bond funds.
- Heat and Air Conditioning was installed on the top floor of the Town Hall. The renovations to the Town Hall were phased to address the highest priorities within the available funds. The heating and air conditioning of the top floor was the last scope of work. This was a residual 2018 Encumbrance.

- Under the leadership of the Road Agent, Phase II of the Chester Road improvements were completed. On Hooke Road, drainage improvements, shoulder work, and a base course of pavement was installed. Major repairs and a base course of new pavement were installed on Ann Lane and a section of Shirkin Road was replaced with new subgrade, and a new base course of pavement.
- Under the leadership of our Emergency Management Director and our Health Officer the Town was kept informed of the latest COVID information, guidance and direction from State of NH officials, including assistance and clarification on reimbursements and grants, recommendations for public meetings and voting and other public health and safety matters. This was a significant resource drain on everyone this year, including all of our public safety officials who have done an amazing job in trying circumstances.
- The Fremont Fire Rescue Department continued to offer paid on-call shifts for EMS coverage focusing on overnight and weekend coverage. The year 2020 was the first full of the initiative and continued to be successful with improving availability to respond to emergency calls for service. For several years prior to 2020 the Fire Rescue Department members were compensated for their participation by allocation of a fixed amount of budgeted money through a "Points" system. Throughout the year 2020 Department members were paid hourly for their time when attending meetings, participated in trainings, and responded to calls. The same funds that were previously allocated through the Point system were utilized for hourly compensation to members for their Department time. In 2020 the Fremont Fire and Rescue Department continued with implementation of several membership recruitment strategies. The strategies are continuing to work well. It should be noted that Fire Rescue Department successes have occurred during the impact of the COVID pandemic and at time when the departmental leadership availability was affected by individual health matters. Elsewhere in the Town Report will be a Fire Rescue Department report.
- The Fremont Police Department has endured a police officer vacancy for much of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year and at year end there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> vacancy occurring at year end that had been anticipated. A successful recruitment process was completed at year end and the training and certification process is planned over the next several months. The Department has managed the personnel shortage by using overtime, reassigning administrative and investigative time and the deferment of vacation time use.
- With funding from the subscriber franchise fee, Fremont Community Television (FCTV) continues to live broadcast and record for later broadcast public meetings and community events. Within 2020 there was equipment replacement and upgrades in the control room and the purchase of a large TV monitor for presentations at public meetings and for remote participation in meeting that are occurring virtually. FCTV's role and importance to the Fremont community continues to evolve and grow in importance. The FCTV Committee is an example of a few strong contributors making a large contribution to FCTV and its development. The Board of Selectmen thanks them for their vision and commitment. Elsewhere in the Town Report there will be an FCTV report.

Year End 2020 encumbrances included:

- Labor and materials for crack sealing and painting of the parking lot of the Fremont Public Library
- Labor and materials for interior painting of the Fremont Public Library
- Purchase and installation of a storage shed for Cemeteries
- Purchase and installation of a storage shed for the Safety Complex
- Installation of electrical power for the ball fields at Memorial Park
- Purchase and installation of a replacement phone system for the Fremont Safety Complex
- Engineering evaluation of Fremont's existing roads with an assessment of the road improvement needs looking forward ten years

On the 2021 Town Meeting Warrant there are several articles that we would like to bring to your attention:

- Article 8 requests authorization to hire an additional full time police officer. Fremont is understaffed by recommended standards and compared to similar communities in our area. The Fremont Police Chief is once again making this recommendation in the interest of public safety. A similar article has been proposed in 2018, 2019 and 2020 that has had a lot of voter support but have not been approved. We and many in the Fremont community recognize the need for an adequate police force for the safety and protection of our community. It should be noted that in 2020 the FPD had two resignations that they need to fill with new personnel who need to complete the NH Full-Time Police Academy. As a result, the Department has had overtime, administrative and investigative time that has had to be redirected to working patrol shifts and has deferred vacation time.
- It is noteworthy that there are no individual Warrant Articles for road improvements on this 2021 Town Warrant. For several years there has been discussion about including road improvements in the Town's Highway Department operating budget. Within the Highway Department operating budget there is \$247,000 for road improvements. The Road Agent, Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee have long understood that it is important that we as a community routinely address the maintenance and repair needs of our streets and that it not be deferred, so that on-going needs can be annually addressed. The operating budget (Article 4) is up due to this change in budget planning and we hope that voters will consider the recommendations of the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen when voting on the operating budget.

In summary 2020 was busy and challenging year. Once again we are thankful for the past support of the Town's voters / taxpayers. The Board of Selectmen is grateful for the opportunity to serve the Fremont community and looks forward to working with everyone again in 2021.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gene Cordes, Chair

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Roger A Barham