

## **REPORT OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

The Selectmen's Office had another busy year in 2007. The Town has been fortunate to have a lot of stability in the Selectmen's office with Heidi Carlson completing 13 years and Jeanne Nygren is now in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The current Board members have significant experience as Selectmen and have worked together as a Board for several years.

It hardly seems possible that we could have another year where the rare and thought to be unusual event, Exeter River flooding, could occur again. With the early spring rains of April came yet another flood event. Again, properties along the Exeter River and town roads were most affected by the high water. The Fremont Fire / Rescue, Police and Highway Departments worked hard to protect public safety and reduce or prevent property losses. Through FEMA and the State of New Hampshire the Town was able to recover much of the Town's repair expense. Heidi Carlson, Town Administrator and the Highway Department were instrumental in this occurring. The Building and Health Departments worked with residents around clean-up and repair / restoration of their homes. State officials and the American Red Cross were available for guidance and assistance. We are most appreciative of all the hard work of the Town Departments and all the volunteers who made themselves available. Our thoughts go to the victims, who, yet again must struggle to recover.

Highlights of 2007 were the planned Town events. The largest event is the Memorial Day Parade and Service. The involvement of children and veterans in this solemn observance is always the most heart felt. Our guest speaker Mark DeVeber was also a Fremont resident. The Veterans' Day Observance at the Public Safety Complex involved veterans and children recitations. Once again this year we had new veterans present having recently returned from Iraq. The Town was presented with a flag by Fremont Veteran SFC Bruce Courage that had flown over a US base in Iraq during his tour of duty.

In 2007 the Fremont Fire Department and Rescue Squad combined to form the Fremont Fire/ Rescue Department. There was a lot of progress made in the creation of one unified department. Everyone has understood that there would need to be further adjustments over time as they work together under one administration. We anticipate continued work with the Fire Chief and Department Officers as they work to refine their reorganized department.

The Selectmen's budget includes increases in salary lines for cost of living increases and potential step increases for full time employees. We have again changed the health insurance coverage so as to reduce the premium cost for both the Town and the employee. The town salary survey was undertaken as planned through the services of the Local Government Center. As of the writing of this report the final survey report was not yet received and so any recommended changes will likely be able to occur in 2009.

We have included in the warrant several cost-saving items that came to us at the suggestion of a resident, as well as discussions of the Budget Committee. Since the items involved decisions previously voted on at the Town Meeting, we wanted to have the voters have an opportunity to discuss the items and make the decision. These items are placed on the warrant for discussion and approval. This includes not mailing the Town Report and monthly Newsletter. We would still have paper copies available and the electronic versions on the website, but would save on the volume of copies printed and the mailing costs. Many additional information items are now available on the website. Printed copies of the Town Report and Newsletter would be available at Town buildings and other locations for pickup.

There has been some discussion at the Budget Committee level regarding the salaries of elected officials. In the past they have been included in the operating budgets and the payments are reported in the Town Report as payroll expenses. After checking options with state officials, the Board has decided to place an article in the warrant for discussion and hopeful approval. The article lists all current elected positions and their current salary and any other compensation. Voters should keep in mind that elected officials' responsibilities are generally defined by statute and they are responsible to the voters. Elected officials have no direct oversight in their performance by other town officials other than staying within their budget. Once this article is approved, it would remain in effect and future changes would come back before the voters. The article included in the warrant reflects what is currently being paid for salaries, and 2008 recommendations of both the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

The Board of Selectmen appointed an advisory committee to assist in the Cable TV franchise re-contracting. Their task was to gather information regarding what other communities are doing with in their franchise contracts, gather input from Fremont residents and subscribers regarding Cable TV services including a community access channel, and to determine the cost or cost options for various alternatives. When their work was completed they were to present their findings and they could make recommendations if they wish. Their report is elsewhere in this Town Report.

At the time of this writing, the current contract has been extended while the last details of the new contract are being finalized. There is increasing interest in the development of a Fremont Community Access TV Channel so that was much of the focus of the new contract takes that into account. The Board feels strongly, that unless directed to by the voters, Town (taxpayer) funds should not be expended on development of a Community Access TV channel and the funding for CATV should come through the franchise contract via cable TV subscribers. Secondly, the Board feels if the intent of a Community Access Channel is to be for the community then all residents should have the option to have access to this channel by being a subscriber. We have two areas in Fremont that receive their feeds from abutting towns and another street in Fremont, that has never been wired for cable access at all. As part of the proposed contract options, we are reviewing whether the costs for this work should be included in the contract as well. If included, the total impact of these changes should be less than \$1 a month per subscriber.

Finally, again this year there is a petitioned warrant article to change from the Traditional Town Meeting to SB2 (RSA 40:13) official ballot format. The Board continues to feel that the Traditional Town Meeting, wherein the final vote accompanies the discussion and debate, is the best way to engage voters in their decisions. Voters should understand we have always held a deep respect for their decisions and will honor and implement whatever decision is made.

We would like to thank the voters and taxpayers for their support of the Town and its important responsibilities. Our Department Heads and Employees have worked hard and we are most appreciative of those efforts. Municipal government in New Hampshire depends on volunteers and we are most grateful to the volunteers that continue to step forward for boards and committees as well as just helping out when there is a critical need. Our fire rescue public safety officials are also a prime example of volunteerism. The time of the flooding this year is a great example of individuals volunteering to assist.

It has been a pleasure serving you and we look forward to the challenges ahead in 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Cordes

Don Gates Jr  
Fremont Board of Selectmen

Peter Bolduc