

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

With the adoption of the Official Ballot form of Town Meeting (SB2) the Selectmen's Office was especially busy in 2008. Preparations were undertaken to implement policy required for this Town Meeting decision making process. The Town has been fortunate to have balance and stability in the Selectmen's Office with Heidi Carlson now in her 15th year and Jeanne Nygren now in her 4<sup>th</sup> year. There were some changes in Board members, recently elected member Joe Dreyer needed to step down for employment reasons. However, the Town was fortunate that Brett Hunter stepped forward and was appointed to the Board in May to be a member of the Board until the March 2009 Town Elections. Brett has significant experience in municipal government and for many years has had a leadership position in the Fremont Fire Rescue Department.

It looked as if we might get through 2008 without a significant weather event, however in mid-December there was a tremendous ice storm that left Fremont and surrounding communities with significant and lengthy outages for many residents. It hardly seemed possible that we could again be presented with another extreme weather event, but we were. Once again the Fremont Fire Rescue Department, Police Department, and other public safety personnel and volunteers stepped forward to help those in need. We are most appreciative of their help and community spirit.

Highlights of 2008 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 was also a Fremont resident, Grant Mason, who had recently returned from active duty in Iraq. The Veterans' Day observance at the Public Safety Complex involved Veterans and children recitations. Once again as Veterans shared their service history, we are reminded of their sacrifice and contribution to our freedom.

In 2008 long time Fire and Rescue Chief, Dick Heselton retired. Dick had been an active member and leader in the department for over 40 years. Dick's involvement with the Department spanned many years and significant changes over the years culminating in the recent combining of the Fire and Rescue Departments. The Town is indebted to Dick for his many years of leadership and contribution. Richard Butler, who had served as Interim Chief for several months, was appointed Chief. The Board anticipates it will continue to work closely with Chief Butler and the Officers, as they work to refine the combined departments.

The Board fully expected to have the Cable Franchise contract fully renegotiated within 2008. As it turns out the contract was having final changes made at the year end and it is anticipated that the contract will be finalized just after the first of the year. When completed, there will be a funding mechanism for equipment, up to two local access TV channels, and the ability of the entire Fremont Community to access those channels and the ability to have live broadcast from several sites within Town. The management and production of local access channels is typically handled by volunteers. Once the contract is in effect, the Board anticipates the creation of a Fremont Community Access Television (Management) Committee whose tasks and scope of responsibility will be developed at that time.

The Selectmen and Department Heads have worked hard at holding the lines on the proposed budget while maintaining current service levels. The 2009 budget includes modest increases in salary lines, due in part to implementing the 2007 wage survey recommendations which were received in 2008. We have again changed the Town's group health insurance coverage in an effort to reduce the premium cost for both the Town and the employee. In addition, we have chosen to hold off or defer some expenses, recognizing that as taxpayers, we are burdened, and our regional and national economy is in the midst of an extraordinary time.

In keeping with recent practice there are several warrant articles regarding modest salary changes for some elected positions. It is up to the voters to decide on the compensation level of elected officials. Their current salaries are carried in the operating budget.

Finally, in 2008 the voters adopted the Official Ballot form of Town Meeting known as SB2. Our office has worked hard to implement this format. For many it involves learning a new set of legal requirements. Very importantly it has also meant that there was a need for voter information so that the voter could understand the process and learn what to expect. We are learning together and it may require refinements as we better understand the process.

We would like to thank the voters and taxpayers for their support of the Town and its important responsibilities. The Department Heads and employees have worked hard and we are most appreciative. 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 need.

It has been a pleasure serving you and we look forward to the challenges ahead in 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

The Fremont Board of Selectmen

Gene Cordes

Donald W Gates Jr

Brett Hunter

*"Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger. With confidence in our armed forces-with the unbounded determination of our people-we will gain the inevitable triumph-so help us God."*

*~ "A date which will live in infamy..." speech by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1941*