

Report of the Town Administrator

Financial officials spent much of the first quarter of the new year learning the new accounting system, QuickBooks. After a lot of hard work, the system is up and running. We still sort our quirks from time to time, but the Board of Selectmen has found the reporting to be what they want and need to ensure financial oversight.

After our third Deliberative Session on February 8th and voting on March 8th, voters supported the default budget. Voters supported warrant articles to fund Capital Reserve Funds, some funded from unreserved fund balance (Highway equipment \$20,000, Police Cruiser \$12,500 and Town Hall Renovations \$25,000) and some from general taxation (Property Reassessment \$15,000 and Fire Truck \$25,000). Voters also funded purchase of a police cruiser with funds withdrawn from Capital Reserve, the mosquito control program, and establishing a revolving fund for Cable Access fees.

The Town received a total of \$58,293.55 in franchise fees from Comcast and placed these funds into the Town Meeting created revolving fund. The Board of Selectmen began to look at pricing options for necessary cabling and equipment (video and sound systems) and what could be purchased with the amount of money in the fund. No further progress has taken place and no community members have yet come forward to serve on the Cable Advisory Committee to oversee public access. The Board will likely refresh this effort as we get through the 2012 Town Meeting season.

The Energy Committee's grant award projects from 2010 were all nearly completed in 2011. In March 2011 a public hearing was held with Town and School Officials and GDS Associates to present the findings of the building energy audits of Ellis School and the Fremont Safety Complex. Throughout the year, progress was made on these improvements, as money and time allow. This work will continue for years to come. The second grant project was a solar hot water tank expansion at the Fremont Safety Complex, which got underway near year end. It is due to be finished prior to March 2012.

New construction and other property improvements increased the Town's overall assessed valuation from \$358,837,557 to \$363,266,248 for the September 2011 tax rate setting process. We are still seeing slight improvements in growth, and renewal of the former Cooperage project will also help. The Town was involved in completing this project after calling the letter of credit from the Bank. The Cooperage tax deeded properties were redeemed at year end, returning them to taxable status.

It would not be a full year if we didn't have a storm that caused us to lose power! On October 29th the snowfest that foiled Halloween arrived! Power was out in some areas of Town for nearly 6 days. Our public safety and highway crews were ever-ready to help. Fremont's Trick or Treat was delayed by a week so that power was not an additional safety concern. Just in to the new year, the FEMA declaration paperwork was submitted. The Town should be eligible for reimbursement of 75% of the cleanup costs involved with tree and debris removal.

I would like to thank those people who stepped down from their service to the Town in 2011. We bid farewell to Kate Dumas who did not seek reelection as a Trustee of Trust Funds and Laurie Allore who did not seek reelection to the Budget Committee. Nearing year end, Mike Nygren resigned from his seat on the Budget Committee after almost 6 years in the role. That seat remained vacant and will be filled at the March 2012 elections.

We thank everyone who gives so freely of their time to volunteer service in Fremont. Our dedicated employees, and all of the Town's many talented volunteers are invaluable to the function of Town Government. As with all change, people moving on to other endeavors opens doors for new volunteers and employees to join our ranks. If you have some time and the desire to be involved in a role within the community, please come forward. There are unfilled positions on the Parks & Recreation Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission; and the Energy Committee and Open Space Committee can always use more help. A Cable Advisory Committee is yet to be started as well. Thank you to all who serve Fremont in so many ways!

By year end, the Conservation Commission, with the hard work of member Pat deBeer, had earned approval for \$80,000 in grant funds to support the Smith Project. The Project has been in progress for several years and after a lot of hard work by Open Space and Conservation Commission members, and the willingness of the landowners Robert and Richard Smith, the project resulted in a signed Purchase & Sales Agreement as of November 2011. The acquisition will be funded with minimal tax dollars (approximately \$40,000) of the total \$228,000 purchase price. Grants total \$80,000, and the Conservation Commission Land Use Change Tax Fund will support the balance of the purchase price.

The Selectmen were able to turn back some funding from the Town's budget in 2011. The Selectmen again voted to use some of the unreserved fund balance to fund Capital Reserve Funds. It continues to be the Board's position that saving in Capital Reserve Funds is important in planning for the future needs of the Town. This helps budget annually for capital improvements and creates a more balanced effect on the tax rate. Updates to the Capital Improvements Plan are ongoing. The Town needs to continue to think ahead to the large purchases needed for our infrastructure.

Many of the Town Clerk's services, assessing records, and a greater depth of Town information are available on the web, through the Town's web site at www.Fremont.nh.gov. In addition, virtually all Town Board and Committee minutes are available on our website, and meetings are posted in a variety of Town buildings and on the web. We also continue to produce the monthly newsletter, but beginning in 2012 it will be primarily in an electronic format. We will publish up to four issues in print annually, and the remainder will be on the Town's website. Once the new website is fully operational, you will be able to e-subscribe and will receive it in your email box as soon as it is completed and posted each month.

All of our volunteers and employees are to be commended for their vigilance and dedication to Fremont and its residents. The Town is served well by these community servants, whose

experience has helped to see Fremont through many projects, in good times and in bad. If you have never been involved in local government, it is difficult to understand the depth of dedication required to serve in these roles. I encourage all residents to find something in the community to get involved with. From youth athletics to PTA to the many Boards and Committees that are needed within the Town and School District to function, there is a need for so many interested folks to make our community work. The local volunteer is an ever-precious commodity, and one that helps to keep costs down, and preserve the small-town character that Fremont is known and loved for.

Your feedback is helpful regarding what information you are looking for and where you obtain it. We continue to work on getting more forms and information to the website and the Comcast Channel 22, in an effort to reach the community. We hope that residents are able to get some value from these additional resources and information. The new website should be up and running sometime in April or May. On it, you will be able to e-subscribe to some of the publications the town puts on the website, like news notices, the Town Newsletter, and board or Committee meeting minutes. We urge you to make use of this if you are looking for specific Town information.

I would like to thank resident Roger Kirk for his many years of dedicated volunteer service to the Town in the capacity of Webmaster. Roger designed and put together the existing Town website many years ago, and has been a constant aid to employees in maintaining and upgrading it. Without him, it may have been many more years before we were able to offer so much information online. Thank you Roger!

We need your help, and community service is one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. You meet people you might not otherwise meet, cultivate friendships, and learn things you might not otherwise learn. There are so many opportunities to get involved in making Fremont the place you want to live and raise your family. Participate in the annual meetings and find a Committee that interests you. Come on out and see what is going on!

Thank you for your patience and support in these difficult economic times. We do understand the hardship folks are facing, and continue to work hard to do as much as we can for all of our residents. The Board of Selectmen continues to meet weekly to address the Town's business, at 6:00 pm on Thursday evenings in the basement meeting room at the Town Hall.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions or for general information at 895 2226.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator