

Report of the Town Administrator

The Town's longest Deliberative Session on record was held on a near 60 degree day Monday February 4th. The meeting lasted until almost midnight with a complex and lengthy Warrant that generated intense discussion and great questions. We also had record attendance with 76 registered voters checking in, and at least 79 people in attendance. There were a total of 26 Articles including 9 lengthy Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Special presentations were made to Matthew Thomas as the 2018 Town Report Appreciation recipient. Matthew has been the Town's Official Historian for 26 years after a motion from the Town Meeting floor in 1994 to designate him after nearly 40 years "unofficially" in the role. Matthew has worked tirelessly on historic collections for the Town, documenting Fremont people, places and events for much of his life. The publication of the Town's History in 1994 and again updated a few years later, would not have been possible if not for his dedication, research/recordkeeping and talent.

The "Of Special Note" section of the 2018 Town Report highlighted Bruce White, who was also recognized at Deliberative Session. Bruce has been the driving force behind FCTV becoming what it is today. His dedication and quiet determination to the important cause of public



broadcasting in the past five years has been an incredible contribution to the Town, transparency of our government, and public access overall for the Town and School. Bruce is off to some new challenges after selling his home in Fremont. He stayed with us through the transition to new Cable Coordinator Bill Millios, and through the summer mowing season at the

cemeteries. His last meeting broadcasts were at the end of September and Selectmen presented him with a framed write-up at that time.

Voters and Department Heads, with support from the Budget Committee, made some changes on the Deliberative Session Floor to reduce a couple of Warrant Articles, such that the increased burden of repairing the Sandown Road Bridge Overflow could be done with less impact to taxpayers. (A full report of the bridge project begins on page 184). This meant that we only put \$1 in the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and the improvements to Chester Road were reduced significantly from the proposed \$279,000 to \$100,000.

At voting time, all in all, the Town had a successful budget year, with passage of the operating budget, and a Warrant Article that resulted in reconstruction of Phase I of Chester Road and completion of the repair work to the Sandown Road Bridge Overflow.

We are behind in our funding of Capital Reserve Articles but will continue to work toward presentation of them for voter consideration as these reserve funds put the Town in a better position to fund our long-term capital needs, and creates more of a balanced tax rate impact.

Roger Barham ran successfully for re-election to the Board of Selectmen in March, so there were no changes to the makeup of the Board. Several people stepped down or did not seek reappointment in March. This included Suzanne Wicks as Library Trustee, Emily Clark from Parks & Recreation, Mary Anderson from the Budget Committee, and Steve Harms as Cemetery Trustee.

Our long-term Library employee Marlene Emery passed away in March after a period of illness. Marlene was an amazing lady, full of New England spirit and a great resource to me as well as Ellis School and our Library over many years. She continued to work at the Library well into her 80's and we all miss her many contributions. I especially miss her help with proofreading!

FCTV Operator Alex Coulombe left in the spring, and in June left for Air Force training in Texas. We also miss his assistance with winter maintenance operations! We also miss Jackson Rowell, who has found full-time employment in his chosen career field. Felicia Augevich resigned from the FCTV Committee in June and late in the year Greg Fraize filled that vacancy.

Our Annual Memorial Day Celebration was notable. The weather was beautiful so marching was comfortable and a cookout and community gathering was held immediately after the ceremony at the Safety Complex where we were hosted by members of the Fire Rescue Department. We are thankful to our many Military Service personnel, past and present, for their contributions. Their presence makes this day so special. Guest Speaker Jack Mullen also made a wonderful tribute.

We made a special presentation to Tom McGall noting the 50th anniversary of his service at the Battle of Hamburger Hill in 1969 as part of his honorable service in Viet Nam. Tom has been part of Fremont's Memorial Day Services for many years since returning home from the service and we appreciate his guidance. We also note the somber 50th anniversary of the loss of Fremont son Philip Pratt May 31, 1969. On page 218 of this report is a writeup on Philip that was included in our Memorial Day Program.

Many thanks to Veterans who attend these events and share their experiences. We thank you for your sacrifice and your immense service to our Country. We are planning for the 2020 events, so please come forward early to see what you can do to participate in the ceremony. Jeanne Nygren does a great job organizing the event each year and would love to hear from you on how you can help! Call Jeanne or Kathy in our office to help out.

Early summer saw the unveiling of our new website. We have spent a lot of time learning the new software/editing program, and are still trying to ensure all working links, and continue to update and upgrade. The learning curve was more difficult than anticipated and we appreciate your patience through the process, as well as letting us know when links don't work.

Assessors were in the Selectmen's Office as much as two days per week through the fall and winter as they work to have Fremont's revaluation complete by the spring of 2020. The quarterly reviews that have been part of our contract over the past four years made this work flow much better. Owners will receive a letter noting their new value and announcing the process by which property owners can meet with Assessors to review and discuss the new values.

Assessors working in the field are confirming sales information and checking data and listing statistics for properties. They always have MRI identification and a letter from the Town with their name and vehicle information. If you have any questions about this work, please feel free to call the Selectmen's Office and speak with Jeanne (x 303), Kathy (x 302) or Heidi (x 301). We generally have a list of properties they are checking on any given day. As always, pickup work includes any property changes (building permits and other property improvements) and sales information updates if you have recently bought your home.

We were unable to offer Camp Fremont this summer due to lack of staff. We began in the fall looking for a director for the 2020 program and worked with significant effort to try and hold camp in the summer of 2020, knowing it is an important program for our youth. It was proceeding until some changes in the membership of Parks & Recreation caused everyone to step back and take a realistic look at what we could accomplish. Early into 2020 a decision was made to discontinue the efforts for this year, and the money was ultimately removed from the operating budget by voters at Deliberative Session on February 1, 2020.

We also said good-bye to other Town employees and wish them all good luck in their various new adventures! Land Use AA Casey Wolfe left in March to pursue full-time employment in Southboro MA. She has since returned to NH for a position in Merrimack, closer to home. We were very fortunate to find Leanne Miner to fill the position. She has fit well into our staff and brings a strong skillset.

Long-time land use volunteer Jack Downing retired from Town service in July (over the years serving on the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Highway Study Committee and Open Space Committee). Shortly thereafter Jack's wife Lorraine passed away, who was a treasured member of the Fremont Garden Club. Long-time member of the Planning Board (and former Selectman) Brett Hunter also stepped down this summer due to other commitments. We thank them for their service.

Don Bourassa, who had taken care of the Town's ballfields, also retired in late fall. Don has continued to be hands we can count on, helping with voting setup and other short-term tasks when we need him. This is a loss for maintenance of our park and fields and we are still trying to fill his shoes.

Sadly we lost veteran Ballot Clerk Bobbie Stevens when she passed away in September. She will be greatly missed as we approach a record-setting election process in 2020. Bobbie had been part of Fremont elections for the past 40 years!

In September we were fortunate to be chosen by Stantec Consultants as a community service project and were joined on September 25th by a large group of talented volunteers who did some overdue painting at the Highway Shed, and assisted the Fremont Garden Club with relocating Town signs and their garden bases, along with Highway Shed maintenance. This group of volunteers donated dozens of man / woman hours of services and we thank them for their time and energy.



The Fremont Garden Club and their energy and enthusiasm continues to beautify this community. They are a dedicated group that will take on any project of need, and do it with a smile and the community spirit that Fremont is so well-known for. Thank you all for your time and endless energy!

This fall we also isolated money within the Parks & Recreation budget (setting aside another project) to re-roof the concession stand/maintenance garage at the ballfields.

The Board of Selectmen made a decision in October to settle several years of outstanding tax appeal cases with PSNH. This resulted in an abatement of one year of taxes and some refunding, done over two tax bill issues. We are hopeful that some new legislation will put this type of litigation to rest. It has been ongoing by the utility companies for many years and is costly in dollars and staff time to litigate. The utility valuations make up a significant part of our tax base, and the reductions and losses the Town's continue to see affect Fremont, and many other local tax rates. We hope that legislative changes being considered will be more favorable to Towns and their taxpayers. With the loss of utility values, new construction and other property improvements only increased the Town's assessed valuation to \$410,788,368 for the Fall tax rate setting process. A few more new homes were completed on Thunder Road, nearly completing that project, as well as Jacob's Cove. Commercial development continued at the Industrial Park at 663 Main Street including the Altaeros test site, and work began late in the year on the next phase of the Fremont Land LLC endeavors.

The Selectmen and I spent the fall months meeting regularly with the Budget Committee presenting the budget for 2020. These meetings are a good way to learn more about the budget details. For the first time in 2019, we were able to live broadcast meetings from both the basement and first floors of the Town Hall, utilizing the original Channel 22, and the new FCTV Channel 13. All meetings are also rebroadcast on a schedule, and available on Vimeo. We find a great many people accessing meetings and events via both of these venues.



Following along with the tools and teambuilding skills we received from our consultants at MRI, the Fremont Fire Rescue Department continued to grow. Their recruitment efforts yielded several new members, who we have been celebrating as they reach milestones of training and certification. This type of community service is incredibly rewarding as you help your friends and neighbors in their time of need. (Fire Rescue training photo at left)

The Veteran's Open House event took a year off to regroup and see if additional community effort can be gathered to support the program. We have had dwindling participation in this event, and hope that a year off with rejuvenate community involvement and make it possible in a future year. Please contact Kathy or Jeanne in our office if you would be interested in continuing the event.

In December we finally were able to execute the work of converting the Town Office emails to the Town's domain name; and creating for the first time email accounts for all of our Fire Rescue staff. This was months of work and preparation, and was done at the same time as conversion of 10 end of life computers at the Town Hall and Police Station. Windows 7 end of life necessitated some extra computer work. The conversion to Office 365 has its challenges, but also offers us some new opportunities and efficiencies. Please check the home page of the Town's website for updated email addresses as we don't want to miss your messages!

I would also like to acknowledge Elizabeth "Betty" Stanley for 50 years as the Fremont School District Treasurer as she prepares to leave that elected office in March 2020. Betty began in the position in 1971 and has served continuously since. Betty was also Fremont's longest elected Town Clerk for 26 years until her retirement in 1997. Betty is a Fremont native, raised her family here, and made untold contributions to Fremont history and our community as a whole. Thank you for your time and energy. The Town owes you a debt of gratitude for more than 50 years of service in a wide variety of community service positions.

Thank you to all of our Public Safety Officials for all they do every day to keep Fremont safe and secure. All of our employees work hard for you every day, and we sincerely appreciate all of their efforts. As we work hard to do more with less, our staff continues to keep at it. We also appreciate the contracted vendors who handle the Town's winter maintenance operations. This is a thankless job and includes many long hours in the worst weather conditions.



(Photo courtesy of Seth Wood, our Fire Rescue Department training)

We thank everyone who gives 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 day to day function of Town Government. We could not do it without you! 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 Planning Board, Parks & Recreation Commission, and FCTV. Special event execution with the Parks & Recreation Commission is another short-term commitment you might also consider. We are looking for help with elections setup and takedown as well. We do need your help! Please feel free to contact me to discuss your background and experiences so that you might find something which fits your interest.

I also offer a special thank you to Jeanne Nygren (now Selectmen's Administrative Assistant) and Kathy Clement who work in our office daily, assisting with a wide variety of questions, topics and concerns. Their support helps to keep our office running smoothly!

Community service is one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. There are so many opportunities to get involved in Fremont. Participate in the annual meetings and find a Committee, Board or special project/event that interests you. Come on out and see what is going on! You can watch more and more meetings and events on FCTV Channels 13 and 22!

The Selectmen continue to meet weekly to address the Town's business, at 6:30 pm on Thursday evenings in the basement meeting room at the Town Hall. Our meetings are live broadcast, and minutes for all Boards and Committees are posted to the Town's website once approved. Please let us know what else you would like to see posted and available as we are always trying to reach out with more information that people want to see.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for general information at 895 2226 x 301 or by email at hcarlson@fremont.nh.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator



AIC Alex Coulombe, USAF

Photos courtesy of Trish Coulombe, Seth Wood, Heidi Carlson and Mary Kaltenbach