

Report of the Select Board

Notable events in 2023 included three veterans related events that occurred on Memorial Day weekend, a Veteran's Day observance in November and the Wreath's Across America ceremony in December. Through the efforts of the Parks and Recreation Commission, events for children and people of all ages occurred including two around the Christmas Holiday and other events and activities within the year. The Fremont Library Trustees and staff continue to plan and host events that generate a lot of interest from residents.

Community groups for children and youth, such as the FAA and scouting continue to offer organized structured activities, engaging families and creating a community. Fremont has a long history of engaging young people in developing their skills in healthy activities.

In March, Gene Cordes was re-elected to the Select Board for a three-year term. The current Select Board members are very dedicated, have worked together for eight years and collectively have many years of experience in Town Official capacities.

Notable accomplishments in 2023 include:

- Our Town Moderator, Mike Rydeen has continued to plan and guide us through the evolving the voting process. He has kept Town Officials informed of changes and requirements. His leadership will be critical in 2024 with the three elections and a Town Meeting, as well as with regard to new mandates on voting machines.
- Under the leadership and guidance of the Road Agent, Leon Holmes Jr planned and carried out improvements to a portion of Sandown Road and pavement overlays of the Sandown Road Bridge and Whittier Drive. This is in addition to the usual street and right of way maintenance and the challenges of winter maintenance of our streets. He successfully navigated the challenges of personnel turnover and changes in highway maintenance contractors. Within the year the Highway Department received the highly anticipated replacement dump truck that was ordered in 2022.
- Under the leadership of Fire Chief Rick Butler and the Department's Officers, the Fremont Fire Rescue Department continues to successfully recruit, train, and develop its members to be able to provide critical health and safety services to the Fremont community. In 2023 the Select Board has continued to monitor the coverage of the paid on-call shifts and the departments activity and response of various calls for services. It should be noted that late in the year the replacement Rescue Truck, ordered in 2022, was received. The replacement fire truck that was approved at the March 2023 Town Meeting was ordered in the spring and is expected to be received mid-year in 2024.
- At the 2023 Town Meeting an additional full-time police officer position was approved. The recruitment for that position was successful and the new officer completed Police Academy training at year end. Again in 2023, the Fremont Police Department experienced turnover. With the leadership of Chief Jon Twiss, the department was able to bring aboard a replacement Administrative Assistant and an experienced full-time

officer. At the end of the year there was one full-time officer vacancy that needed to be filled. It should be noted that within 2023 the replacement cruisers that were expected in 2022 were received.

- Within 2023 the replacement of the heating and cooling system at the Fremont Public Library that began in 2022 was completed and the repairs to the roof stacks were also completed. The work was planned and lead by the Library Trustees and day to day overseen by the Librarian, Eric Abney.
- The Cemetery Trustees met routinely and completed encumbered work to a failing wall in the Leavitt Cemetery, and at year end made strides in preparing the final rear (new) section at Leavitt for what will be future burial sites. This was done with local vendors and assisted by the Road Agent.
- Fremont's Community Television (FCTV) capacity continues to evolve. Led by Bill Millos, the FCTV Committee has maintained a strong commitment to FCTV's role in Fremont. The FCTV Committee is always looking for membership and additional camera/ control room personnel. These are paid positions and there is training offered for those interested. FCTV is 100% funded from cable franchise fees.
- The engineering for the replacement of the Martin Road Bridge continued in 2023. The 80 % funding available through the NH Bridge Aid has been approved. At year end proposals were being sought from State Approved engineering firms to oversee the actual construction. Once that contract is awarded, proposals for the bridge construction will be sought with the goal of completing the work during the 2024 construction season. You will see additional funding for the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund in Warrant Article 6 to support his effort.
- Our Health Officers were involved in several health matters this year, including greater outreach and public education. They were engaged with our Mosquito Control contractor and NH DHHS Officials throughout the season.
- Our Emergency Management Director continued to liaise with State and Federal Officials as needed during the several weather events of 2023. He has been a great asset in terms of information sharing and coordination efforts for weather events.

Year end 2023 encumbrances included:

- Replacement flooring throughout the Safety Complex. This includes stripping completely the VCT and laying new vinyl plank.
- Replacement/upgrading security and camera systems at the Fremont Safety Complex.
- Retainage for the 2023 road paving work.
- Completion of work begun in 2023 to replace two additional doors in the Safety Complex.
- Reclaimed asphalt for Old Ridge Road to improve the travel surface (grading and drainage work completed in December 2023).
- Cemetery gravestone training and cleaning workshop and materials (Spring 2024)

Relative to the 2024 Town Meeting Warrant, we would like to call to the voters attention to the following Articles:

- In the operating budget, Warrant Article # 5, there is a 3% Cost of Living pay raise for Town employees and a step in the Police Pay Matrix, as well as adjustments in the Highway Department. Maintaining pay rates is critical to retaining personnel and being able to recruit in the current job market. There is also funding for a Town Finance Administrator/HR position. The Select Board has felt for some time that our office is understaffed and very vulnerable to changes in personnel (skill set) or their lack of availability. During 2022 the Select Board formed a Study Committee to review the administrative staffing in nearby communities of similar size in budgets and populations. The data overwhelmingly supported that our office is understaffed, and it was recommended that a Finance Administrator/HR position be added. The funding for that position is included in the operating budget, with half a year salary.
- As mentioned earlier in this report, Warrant Article 6 requests \$100,000 for the Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund. The approval of this Article is critical to the replacement of the Martin Road Bridge and the use of the 80% NH Bridge Aid funding that is available in 2024.
- Again, this year there are Warrant Articles to add to Capital Reserve Funds for Highway Equipment Replacement and Fire Rescue Department Equipment Replacement. Due to the high cost of this equipment the intent is to save funds against the future purchase of these “big ticket” pieces of equipment.
- Several Articles are funded through Unreserved Fund Balance (unexpended dollars from 2023) and not new taxation. This includes the ETF savings accounts for Computer Equipment (WA 9), Library Maintenance (WA 10), and Parks & Recreation Structural Amenities (WA 16).

The Select Board wishes to express appreciation for the support of the voters / taxpayers that occurred at the 2023 Town Meeting. The Select Board is keenly aware that the Town Employees, Department Heads, elected and appointed Town Officials and the ever- present volunteers make what is accomplished possible. We are most appreciative of everyone’s contribution to making our municipal government work.

The Select Board continues to be pleased to have the opportunity to serve the Fremont community and look forward to continuing to work with everyone in the year ahead, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Cordes, Chair
Neal R Janvrin
Roger A Barham
Fremont Select Board

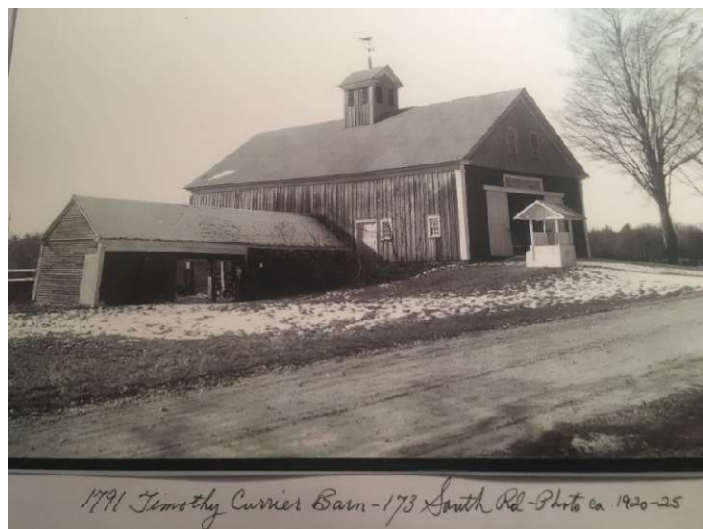


Photo courtesy of Matthew Thomas Historical Collection