

Report of the Town Administrator

Unfortunately, we began the new year with Covid still a forefront concern in all of our minds. We remained open by appointment to try and keep our small staff healthy to continue providing services. The relatively mild winter helped and we saw a lot more use of our trails and outdoor recreation areas. Vaccines were becoming available as we moved into the spring, with our First Responders having access to them early in the new year.

Our Saturday January 30th combined Town and School Deliberative Sessions were again a great success. Turnout was low, but the day was productive and efficient with FCTV setup and takedown, and all the necessary meeting processes done once as opposed to multiple times. No changes were made to the Town's Warrant and it was moved forward to March 9th voting.

Special note was made at Deliberative Session of the Select Board designation of the 2020 Town Report Appreciation to all of our Public Safety Services to include the Fremont Police Department, Fire Rescue Department, Emergency Management Director and Health Officer. All of these men and women have been instrumental in carrying the community through these trying and difficult times. The pandemic is wearing on all of us. Patience, clear heads and keeping up with the most current information has helped us maintain Town Services.



March voting held at Ellis School included readiness to keep the public safe with distancing and cleaning measures to ensure a safe voting environment. Voter turnout was 651 and we continue to use PPE, cleaning supplies and safety equipment from the State of NH for our polling location.

We thank voters for passage of the operating budget, and appreciate your thought and consideration of a variety of Warrant Articles, showing a thorough review of the topic matters involved. Funding for Capital Reserve Articles (Fire Truck, Bridge and Highway Equipment) passed; along with Mosquito

Control. These reserve funds put the Town in a better position to fund long-term capital needs, and create more of a balanced tax rate impact. The timeline for our next replacement fire truck is likely within the next budget cycle.

Neal Janvrin was re-elected to the Select Board, so there were no changes to the makeup of the Board, who became the Select Board after the voting was completed. We have tried to update all of the nomenclature related to the old "Board of Selectmen" but continue to find references in many places.

We were able to fully reopen Town Services in May. We will continue to serve in any way we can. Please call us or email the Department you need and we will get you the services or information you need if you are unable to come in person. We are using the mail, drop box and other creative means to get things done. We answer the phone all the time we are in the Select Board's Office to assist you in any way possible. We remain vigilant about cleaning, and as of year end the Mask Ordinance is back in place given the increased cases beginning over the Thanksgiving holiday. We never thought we would still be using all the Covid terms another full year into the pandemic. At the writing of this report in early January, we again look toward another spring and the hope that the world becomes a healthier place.



On May 20, 2021 we officially unveiled Eagle Scout Kenneth Adams' project at Memorial Fields with a Ribbon Cutting Event. Kids were playing on the fields and families, FAA and the community gathered with the Select Board for the event.

Kenneth and his family worked throughout the preceding year to construct a ramp to the soccer field to make access easier from the parking area to the fields. Parks & Recreation Commission member Nancy Murray successfully wrote a grant in the amount of \$4,000 from AARP to fund the work, along with support from the Town and FAA. (This photo courtesy of Kenneth's Mom Kriscinda Adams from April 24, 2021 when Kenneth put finishing touches on the ramp).

Our Memorial and Veterans Day events were cancelled. We are richer for the experiences and stories shared at these events by Americans who have shaped the world we live in. You were not forgotten just because of the pandemic, and we again sent out mailings to our Veterans in November. We are already looking to plan a safe 2022 Memorial Day event outdoors. The extremely long lead time to organize and execute these events means we have to make a decision long before the date of the event. We are looking for help from the patriotic Fremont community to get the Memorial Day Program organized. Please reach out to us at the Select Board's Office if you can help! We thank our Veterans Past and Present, for your sacrifice and immense service to our Country.

The 2021 budget was utilized as intended for the most part. Town employees received 2% raises. A new police officer was hired and entered the NH Police Academy for 16 weeks. By far the largest change in the operating budget was to include an additional \$250,000 in paving and road upgrade funding within the Highway Department. This was done at the recommendation of the Budget Committee to account for the fact that the Town wants to consciously improve

approximately two miles of roadway per year. We had previously put these funds in individual Warrant Articles.

If we can keep up with this schedule and budget (accounting for inflation), it would allow for the near complete reconstruction of our current road inventory in a 20-year timeframe. This is not a perfect formula but over the past couple of years we have made significant improvements to our roads, and will continue to do so with the Town approving funding. This also has to be updated as new roads are added to inventory and accepted by the Town. This is the cost of doing business to maintain our infrastructure given current safety and construction standards.

There was some budget residual within various departments. Some of this was encumbered to cover orders with extremely long lead times. In other cases, the budget was simply underspent from proposed uses or within the Police Department due to resignations and long lead times to replace staff. Several projects that could not be finished prior to year end were encumbered. The Town will return about \$16,000 to the General Fund to offset the current year tax rate. The Board also removed one large ticket item from the 2022 Warrant by placing an order for a replacement backhoe for the Highway Department without raising further appropriations. This decision also saves on future interest payments. The Select Board has again proposed our two Expendable Trust Fund Articles be funded from the Unreserved Fund Balance, so that these savings accounts will grow without further impact to the tax rate.

We continue to pursue grant opportunities from various pools of State and Federally available funds. The most current grant for equipment will help fund the cost of new equipment for the police cruisers due for their 3-year replacement rotation in 2022. The cruiser body style has changed, changing and thus increasing, the equipment that fits inside them (cage, equipment mounts, etc). The grant allowed us to keep the budget payment amount the same within the Police Department operating budget, thus these changes will not impact taxpayers.

We have continued to see increasing residential sales prices in Fremont, and a lot of turnover in property. Additionally, there is continued growth in the housing stock as additional developments are completed, and new subdivisions and site plans approved. The Currier Lane Development finished up with 12 new homes; an Open Space Development is being planned on Scribner Road, and near year end a similar clustered development is near conditional approval on Main Street near the power lines. We were shocked to see that the increasing sales prices reduced our equalization ratio to 76.5%, which is significant just one year out from the property revaluation of 2020.

The Town's contracted assessors from MRI continue to be in the field weekly doing quarterly reviews and general pickups of improvements and changes to properties. We were able to convert to the updated version of the Vision CAMA software. We had put off this upgrade to be sure all the bugs were worked out. We were able to do it with savings from other lines in the budget, and therefore removed the initial request for it in the 2022 budget. We continue to include the maintenance and hosting costs in the operating budget so this data is available 24/7 on the internet. You can access the Town's assessing data from the Town website, and the new

system allows for more frequent upgrades, done automatically. You can always obtain a copy of your property assessment card from our office, but also now just as easily and updated from the web. Anyone who has questions or concerns about their value can contact the Select Board's Office. Abatements for 2021 are due no later than 4:00 pm on Tuesday March 1, 2022.

We said good-bye to other Town employees this year, and wish them well in their various new endeavors. This includes Michael Malloy, retiring from our Maintenance staff, Scott Cook and Lloyd Bishop retiring from our Cemetery Department, Peter Morelli, Phil Houten and Greg Huard resigning from the Fremont Police Department. Additionally, Mike Nygren did not seek another term on the Budget Committee and Mike Wason stepped down from the Planning Board. At year end Debbie Caputo stepped down from the Parks & Recreation Commission as well. We thank you all for your service.



Our wonderful Garden Club worked their magic around Town once again. From spring through holiday decorations, they keep Fremont looking sharp. They are a dedicated group that will take on any garden project, 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!

The Town also worked closely with the FAA leadership throughout the year on field

improvements at Memorial Park. Funds had been encumbered several years ago for electrical work to prep the fields for some future lighting. This work was done in the summer to cause the least disruption to the FAA schedule, and immediately resulted in an outlet at each field (for pitching machines, for example). At some future point this may be expanded but there are no immediate plans.

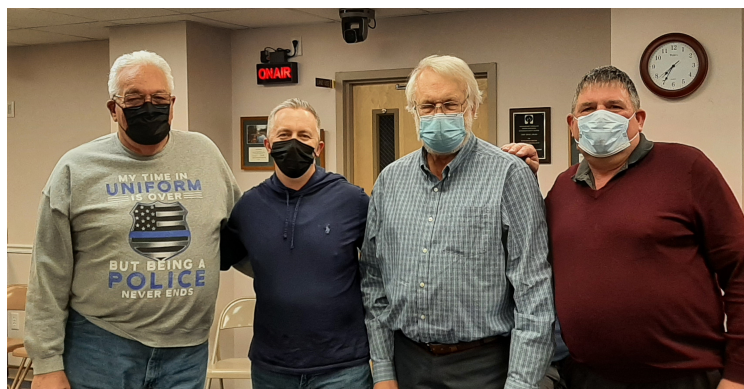
The Town also spent resources to improve conditions at the playground by fixing equipment and refreshing the entire area with wood chips. We also spent



significant funding to improve the playing surface on the soccer field. We have returned to budgeting for multiple fertilizations annually, and this year also added two aeration and reseeding projects as well as a core aeration and overseeding project. Kids and adults being outside during the pandemic has been a great way to blow off steam!

Elections are one of the most important tasks of your elected officials, led by our Moderator Michael Rydeen, who is helped in the voter process by Supervisors of the Checklist and the Town Clerk's staff including ballot clerks. The organization and setup of these events is momentous. Maintenance staff are key to the setup. We thank all of them for their fastidious attention to details and to the public for being steadfast participants in the process! We are always looking for help to setup and takedown of elections. Please reach out to me if you are interested in helping us with these tasks a few times each year.

The Select Board presented Michael Rydeen with the 2021 Town Report Appreciation for his work on maintaining safe, efficient and ethical elections. Thank you to all of our election officials for your hard work in this area.



During the summer months the Supervisors of the Checklist completed the 10-year purge process for the checklist which is required by law. Nearly 800 letters went out to those who had not met recent date specific voting criteria. Following those notifications the checklist was updated per the strict process outlined by NH Statute. As of this writing and the most recent Supervisor session, there are 3,095 registered voters in Fremont.

Near year end there was increased discussion about the use of the voting machine at Fremont elections, and you will see a petition Warrant Article when you vote in March addressing that matter. We encourage you to get the information on the use of the machine in Fremont. There was a lot of discussion at the December 15, 2021 Budget Committee meeting, which includes our Town Moderator and details about the way the machine is cared for, used, and secured. This was also discussed in detail at Deliberative Session.

As of July 21, 2021 NH hit the 100,000 mark of Covid cases. These numbers continue to grow and as of January 25, 2022, there were 266,000 cases in NH. Exposure and quarantine algorithms are constantly changing and are updated frequently. The need to be ready, resourceful, quick-thinking and adaptive have never been more evident.

Coordinator Bill Millios and his team of FCTV operators including Greg and Ian Fraize, Jose Rivera Hernandez and Todd O'Malley live broadcast a variety of community events, the voting machine process, and our public meetings. Near year end they also expanded their capabilities

to include livestreaming of all meetings which are broadcast from the Town Hall Basement Meeting room. This has kept the community engaged and been a huge expansion of the public output these great folks are capable of. We thank them for all their efforts!

The Select Board, Department Heads and I spent the fall months meeting to discuss budgets followed by our presentations to the Budget Committee presenting the budget for 2022. These meetings are a good way to learn more about the budget process and details. We try to plan them on the alternative Wednesday nights from the Planning Board as the basement meeting room is the most efficient room to broadcast from and everything held there can be live broadcast. FCTV is able to live broadcast meetings from both the basement and first floors of the Town Hall, utilizing Channels 22 (primary) and 13, so when we are “double booked” this is an option as well as the rebroadcast on FCTV. All meetings are also rebroadcast on a schedule, and available on Vimeo.

Our trash contract is a big ticket budget item and we are seeing an increase in the number of new residential occupancies, which will continue to affect that. Our contract has a percentage increase annually and is also adjusted by the count of new Occupancy Certificates issued by the Building Department. The number is based on the period July 1 to June 30 and has increased substantially in the past couple of years. The reporting for the current cycle, which we are only just over half through, is already over the full increase from the prior 12 month period.

Reporting Period	Number of CO's issued
07/01/2018 to 06/30/2019	2
07/01/2019 to 06/30/2020	8
07/01/2020 to 06/30/2021	13
07/01/2021 to 06/30/2022	16 through only 01/31/2022

We also saw significant fluctuation in the value of recyclables during the calendar year 2021. The value throughout the year ranged from a low of \$16.06 to a high of \$108.20. At year end it was trending toward the mid-range of those numbers, at approximately \$60 per ton. On average for the year it was \$59.92 which is less than the MSW tipping fee. We expect that current market conditions will continue to fluctuate as with all supply and demand at the present time.

In late Fall, the Town received half of what our reported allocation will be of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds, totaling \$246,544.12. We held a Public Hearing on October 28th and discussed a wide variety of projects that haven't been funded to date, which these funds could be used to complete. One such project, overdue for several years, is the repair and repaving of the Safety Complex driveway and parking lot. This was the only project undertaken in 2021 and used a total of \$81,117.30 of the grant funds for that work. We will do a full reporting of the funds as the projects wrap up. Projects and uses have guidelines which are still being finalized as we enter 2022.

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. 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. Thank you to the townspeople for your patience and support!

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, Zoning Board (alternates) Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, and FCTV. 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.



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 meetings and events on FCTV Channels 13 and 22! Our bulletin board and the Town Website are also full of information for residents.

The Select Board meets 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 provide more information that people want to see. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for general information at 603 895 2226 x 301 or by email at hcarlson@fremont.nh.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in." ~ Author Unknown

Photos courtesy of Kriscinda Adams, Michelle Gallant and Heidi Carlson