

ADMINISTRATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

The Board of Selectmen serves as the Town's Chief Executive Officer and, among its other duties, provides strong and active leadership in setting the Town's strategic direction and coordinating the efforts of the various Town agencies.

Putting the Master Plan to Work

Following the Planning Board's November 2010 acceptance of the Town's newest Master Plan, the selectmen began 2011 by considering how best to implement the Master Plan Committee's recommendations.

Steve Dungan, Chair at that time, voiced the Board's determination that the new plan "would not collect dust on a shelf," often the fate of similar plans. He proposed a prioritized list of actions to guide the Board's implementation, which members then adopted. They divided up the work and at the same time strengthened their liaison roles with the other Town boards and departments in order to work more efficiently and effectively.

Continuing under Mr. Salvie's chairmanship, the Board has focused on items that it could affect directly, such as bringing water to Lower Village and trying to encourage economic development. The Board had oversight responsibility for implementation of other elements of the plan. Throughout 2011, the Board made progress on its own action items and facilitated work on the others. By the end of 2011, virtually all of the high-priority Master Plan recommendations were complete or underway.

In the May 2011 annual election, and a Fall 2010 special election, two veteran members of the Finance Committee, Gary Bernklow and Tom Ryan, were voted in to replace retiring members Steve Dungan and Tom Ruggiero, respectively.

Capital Building Projects

In anticipation of the Pompositticut School building becoming vacant when students moved to the new Center School, the Board established a Pompo Reuse Committee to investigate possible future uses of the building. The investigation found numerous Town groups in need of space.

At the same time, Fire Chief McLaughlin further defined his department's needs for an expanded and renovated fire station at its current location. And the Randall Library Trustees, faced with the ongoing water leaks and critical space shortages, moved to address the building's issues.

In November, Town Meeting approved funds for pre-design evaluations of the three buildings and, in December, the Board established three capital building committees: a Community Center Building Committee, a Fire Station Building Committee, and Randall Library Building Committee, each charged bringing building options to voters in the autumn of 2012. Members

of the Board of Selectmen serve on each building committee, with other officials and community members at large.

Affordable Housing

The Board enthusiastically supported proposals for additional affordable housing at Plantation Apartments and Pilot Grove by the Stow Community Housing Corporation and the Stow Elderly Housing Corporation.

Land and Water

With the anticipated closure of the Assabet Water Company, all of its former customers in Harvard Acres were faced with the prospect of drilling individual wells. Recognizing the hardship this posed for some homeowners, Town Administrator William Wrigley worked with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and other officials to devise a low-interest loan program for homeowners, using state funds. The Building Department and Board of Health carried out all the necessary inspections. When Assabet Water shut down for good on March 15, all the affected homes had their own water. The Board congratulated Mr. Wrigley for managing this huge undertaking.

Having completed its work on Stow's segment of the regional Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT), the Stow ARRT was dissolved by the Board, and replaced by a new committee, the Multi-Use Track Road Committee, to focus exclusively on the Track Road section of the trail.

The Board declared the Larsen apple barn at Center School as surplus property at the request of the Elementary School Building Committee. The building was scheduled for demolition in December.

Public Safety

With the retirement of Police Chief Mark Trefry, the Board formed a search committee to recommend his replacement. The search resulted in a recommendation to appoint Sgt. William Bosworth, a department veteran, to the position of Stow's Chief of Police, an appointment which the Board made in April.

In October, the Board received numerous complaints from residents about the traffic snarls on the roads to Honey Pot Hill Orchard during apple season. A gridlock on Columbus Day spurred the Board to formally adopt a traffic and safety plan for the area from the police department and publicly support its enforcement.

October ended with a Halloween snow and ice storm creating a region-wide loss of power from downed trees and wires and other storm-related problems. The Board held an informative public debriefing session with Police, Fire, Highway, and the Hudson Light and Power Department.

State and Regional Programs

The Board encouraged Stow's state legislators to adopt proposed municipal health insurance reform and supported regional transportation dispatch services, nursing services, and mutual aid.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary M. Bernklow
Charles Kern, Clerk
Thomas E. Ryan III
James H. Salvie, Chair
Laura Y. Spear

Susan McLaughlin, Administrative Assistant
Phoebe Haberkorn, Office Assistant

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

The Stow town administrator, by Charter, serves as the town's chief administrative officer. In this capacity, the town administrator manages the day-to-day operations of the town, functions as its chief fiscal officer, chief procurement officer, chief personnel officer and its primary contract negotiator. In addition, this position serves the town as chairman of the dispatch communications administrative body, as the labor union grievance hearing appeal officer, the sexual harassment officer and the public records management officer. Throughout the year 2011, the town administrator was actively engaged in managing significant matters in each of these areas.

The most notable aspect of this job is developing the annual operating budget. At the annual town meeting in May 2011, as has been the case for several years, the town administrator recommended a balanced FY-2012 budget within the limits prescribed by proposition two and one-half. In fact, the FY-2011 budget approved at town meeting left the town with unused levy capacity in excess of \$900,000. The FY-2012 municipal budget is a level services budget. The most noteworthy number in the budget relates to debt service.

For FY-2012 the town's annual debt payment increased by 27% to \$1,657,196. This significant increase is due primarily to the fact that the first full principal and interest payment on the initial 9 million dollar bond issuance for the Center school project is due in FY-2012. There has been a second project bond issuance of 7 million dollars and the first principal and interest payment associated with this borrowing will impact the town's annual debt payment in FY-2013. Both of these substantial annual debt payments will be on the books for the next 25 years.

Further, it is important to note that at a special town meeting last November, the voters approved proceeding with the preliminary design phase on three new facility improvement projects: the library, the fire station and the community center. The town's debt burden will necessarily increase, if and as, each of these three projects proceeds to full design and construction.

The FY-2012 budget transfers \$50,000 from Free Cash to the Stabilization Fund in a continuing effort to increase the amount of the town's stored assets. Also, \$200,000 in Free Cash has been