

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Members of the Board of Selectmen are collectively the chief executive officer of the town. As such, we are responsible for managing numerous administrative tasks and setting priorities. On the fiscal side, we work closely with the Town Administrator to ensure that our annual operating budget provides needed services in a cost-effective manner. Finally, we represent the Town's interests in various legislative and regulatory affairs. As noted below, 2009 was a very busy year in this regard.

Stow is blessed with many talented residents who step forward to volunteer for numerous boards and task forces that perform much of the town's work. The Selectmen appoint members to approximately 20 committees. Although many of the same people offer to serve repeatedly, there were many new "faces" on the scene during 2009. As we asked these folks why they applied, a common reply was "I wanted to give something back to the community." We now post all available volunteer opportunities on the town website, and we encourage residents to review it regularly to see how they might participate.

One major project that involved many volunteers is the Stow Community Park. Once Town Meeting approved the funding, the Selectmen appointed an Implementation Team to work with the contractor. This project is now essentially complete, and there will be a dedication ceremony in the spring of 2010.

At the Special Town Meeting in October, voters approved plans for a renovation and expansion of the Center School. The Elementary School Building Committee (ESBC)\* appointed by the Selectmen following Annual Town Meeting in 2007 to manage this complex project, after many meetings and many hours of hard work, secured a commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority for funding that will cover about 50% of the project cost.

The school project will consolidate grades pre-K to 5 at Center, thus freeing up Pompositticut for other uses. The Selectmen are assembling a team of interested parties to look objectively at all options and prepare a recommendation for a future Town Meeting.

The Selectmen believe that Stow needs more affordable housing; e.g., supportive units, homes that qualify for our Subsidized Housing Inventory, and workforce housing. Fortunately Stow has all of the important groups in place to make significant progress in this area. We have the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (SMAHT)\* appointed by the Selectmen after a Town Meeting vote in 2008. We have a Community Preservation Committee\* which funds affordable housing initiatives, and the Town is supporting the efforts of a non-profit entity called the Stow Community Housing Corporation (SCHC). The SCHC developed a proposal for a major expansion in the number of affordable units in the fall of 2009. These three groups are now working together to obtain grants and provide seed funding for land acquisition.

Several years ago, the Selectmen were informed that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was going to enforce setback requirements for certain businesses in Stow's Lower Village. The small lot sizes make it impossible to provide the necessary separation between wells and septic systems. The solution was to find a centralized source of water. At the time, the Selectmen asked our Town Administrator to set up a team to provide water to the Lower Village area. This task turned out to be far more complex and time-consuming, and to this day, the water problem remains unresolved. In addition to the negative impact on the existing businesses, the

lack of water is a major roadblock for future economic development. It may also affect the school building project and the plans for additional affordable housing. The Town Administrator has spent a great deal of time on this matter, and we are hopeful that there will be a satisfactory resolution early in 2010.

The Selectmen have been following the activities of the Master Plan Committee throughout the year. This team has members from several other committees and boards, including one Selectman. The final plan will be available during the first quarter of 2010, and the Town Administrator along with two Selectmen will coordinate implementation.

Anyone who has seen the Assabet River during the warmer months knows that weeds and algae are major problems. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has in fact concluded that the river does not meet the standards of the Clean Water Act. In order to determine what steps might be taken to bring the river into compliance, the DEP commissioned a feasibility study to look at point source reductions of phosphorus at the waste treatment facilities, sediment removal, and dam removal. The study was completed late in 2009, and the Selectmen submitted comments after consulting with interested citizens and representatives of other boards and committees. Meanwhile, the city of Marlborough filed a request with the DEP and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to allow it to increase the volume of treated wastewater it discharges by over 40%. Much to our surprise, DEP and EPA granted Marlborough's request even though their waste treatment plant does not meet current standards. The Selectmen then worked with our Town Counsel and others to prepare two formal appeals: one to the Massachusetts DEP and one to the EPA. The Selectmen regard the health of the Assabet River as a high priority, and we encourage residents to follow developments carefully during 2010.

Although we appoint a large number of committee members each year, we realized that in many cases we did not provide specific objectives to appointees. Furthermore, all too often, once we established a committee we did not always stay in touch to make sure there was progress and that the members had the resources they needed. As a result, the Selectmen developed and adopted a "Committee Management" procedure in 2009. We believe this new approach will make committees more effective and goal-oriented.

Late in the year the Selectmen identified priority goals. We intend to review the status of each priority at our first meeting every month. We want to be certain that as Selectmen, we are doing everything we can to ensure progress. The monthly review will also help identify areas where additional resources may be required. The list of priorities has been published in the *Stow Independent*. It also appears below:

- Obtain water for the Lower Village and Town Center
- Increase the Town's affordable housing stock
- Implement the elementary school building project
- Support the Minuteman Vocational Technical School building project
- Support economic development
- Determine the future use of the Pompositticut School Building
- Develop a plan for a senior/community center
- Protect the Assabet River

Note that we have not ranked the priorities because they are all important, and they can all be pursued simultaneously. The only exception is the first one: getting water for Lower Village. This is the Selectmen's most important priority.

We would like to conclude our report by offering our most sincere appreciation to all of the town employees for their professional and dedicated work. We also have utmost appreciation for all of the residents who contributed their time and effort during the year. The Selectmen and town employees could not do it without your help. Thanks to you, Stow is a great place to live.

\*Each of these committees has submitted reports to this Annual Report. Please refer to them for further details of their work and accomplishments.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Dungan, Chair  
Kathleen Farrell  
Thomas Ruggiero, Clerk  
Laura Spear

Ellen Sturgis  
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 chief 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 2009, functioning in these various administrative positions, the Town Administrator managed several significant matters.

At the Annual Town Meeting in May 2009, for the fourth consecutive year, the Town Administrator recommended a FY 2010 balanced budget that did not require general override above the limits of proposition two and one-half. Stow has not had an override since FY 06, when the operating budget needed \$350,000 in the form of a general override to be balanced. Before that, the FY 05 operating budget required a general override of \$250,000. In FY 04, the Town faced a one million dollar budget deficit and was required to utilize both an approval of a general override of \$414,500 together with budget cuts and the expenditure of stored assets to balance the operating budget.

The FY 2010 municipal budget is a level-services budget. It is also close to being level-funded, with total spending increasing only 1.2% to \$22,174,692 in comparison to FY 2009. It is important to note that total revenues in FY 2010 will exceed the total budget expenditures leaving the Town with some amount of unused levy capacity.

Within the total budget, spending for the general operating budget (excluding the schools) increased by 2.9% to \$5,094,088 in comparison to the FY 2009 budget. The Nashoba Regional School District assessment increased by 3.46% to \$13,043,439; and the Minuteman Vocational Technical District assessment decreased by 22% to \$750,000. The Town's non-bonded capital project budget increased by 28% in FY 2010 to \$446,000.