

Select Board Annual Report 2019

As we share this with you in April 2020, we are all experiencing uncertainty for the future and where we, as a community, will stand when we emerge from the grips of this global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Unprecedented in our lifetimes, you can rest assured that Karen, Bill and I, along with your Town Administration and employees are committed to providing the services you count on to carry out the functions of Our Town government. Aware that much of the work with running the town is borne on the shoulders of our countless dedicated volunteers, we look forward to the day when we can all join together, in person, to share those steadfast passions once again and carry on fulfilling the visions set forth in our Master Plan.

Hear ye, we present to you the Town of Peterborough, New Hampshire Annual Report from the office of the Select Board, year ending December 31,2019, a timeline:

January - April

- Joint Select Board / Budget Committee meetings started in January and ran weekly until the beginning of March.
- In February, the Board approved the submission of an application by Luci Corp. DBA Northeast Products (NEP) of Peterborough for working capital and equipment purchases, leading to 25 new jobs for persons from low-to-moderate income families. NEP is a manufacturer of ThermaSeat cushion products. The execution of a Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$500k was facilitated through Monadnock Economic Development Corporation. The total project was anticipated to exceed \$240k of investment in Peterborough.
- Leo Smith was promoted to Finance Director, filling the position left by the resignation of former director Brenda Fox-Howard. Leo's expertise and creativity bring fiscally sound practices to the team. His implementation of the new financial software acquired by the Town has proven to be paramount to accurate forecasting and implementing the zero-based budgeting policy mandated by Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett.
- In March, the Select Board approved a \$250k expenditure from the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund to the Monadnock Conservancy for the purchase of land adjacent to Cunningham Pond as recommended by the Peterborough Conservation Commission. This "high priority" piece of land consisting of 104 acres was lauded by long time resident, former Select Board member Liz Thomas as "a very rich place with diverse wildlife including unusual butterflies and otters, good for both people and wildlife."
- In an effort to accommodate greater outreach to constituents, Town Administration added the app Burbio (www.burbio.com) to its existing list of platforms with which to disseminate information to the public. Burbio, a community events repository, will complement the Town's official website, Select Board mailing list, Facebook, Twitter and Nixle Alert System. Live and/or archived Select Board meetings are available on Comcast channel 22 and also Ustream, accessible online via the link on the Town of Peterborough home page.
- Again, in April, the Board approved the submission of an application by Nuttin' Ordinary of Peterborough, a manufacturer of a cashew based cheese product cultured with probiotics, for working capital and equipment purchases, leading to up to 6 new jobs for persons from low-to-moderate income families. The execution of a Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$120k was facilitated through Monadnock Economic Development Corporation. The total project was anticipated to exceed \$1 million of investment in Peterborough.

May Town Meeting, Ballot

- Voters turned out at the polls in May, overwhelmingly supporting the proposed fiscal year 2020 Operating Budget of \$16,218,845, proving your trust in the painstaking work and collaboration between this Board, Administration, Department Heads, our elected Budget Committee and appointed Capital Improvement Plan Committee.
- The Board welcomed new member Bill Taylor, filling the seat vacated by the departure of accomplished, longstanding Selectwoman Barbara Miller, whose dedication to Our Town bore evidence in her commitment and tenacity right through to her final Town Meeting.
- • A petition Zoning Amendment asking to amend Traditional Neighborhood Overlay Zone 1 and Repeal Traditional Overlay Zone 2 failed at the ballot box due to a Protest Petition requiring a 2/3rds majority. This would set off a series of lawsuits and Declaratory Judgements between The Town and a small group of residents. Your Select Board spent the better part of the rest of the year mediating between parties involved. A task force led by Selectwoman Karen Hatcher was created to update the Housing chapter of the Master Plan. Considering facts and current data, the group intends to put together recommendations for the Master Plan Steering Committee. This will, in turn, advise the Planning Board on next steps with future zoning amendments. The entire Select Board considers this process to be a priority going forward.
- Voters also swayed in favor of supporting the Veterans Tax Credit Adjustment, one that now includes veterans of all foreign wars and conflicts all the way up to the present.

May Town Meeting, Open Session

- Through public input led by Bill Taylor, the Select Board amended a \$4mil Bond Warrant Article for funding for a new Department of Public Works Facility to be located on Water Street near the Wastewater Treatment Facility down to a \$2.5mil Bond for renovation of the existing Facility on Elm Street, no doubt contributing to his successful run for the Board seat. This Article passed by a 2/3rds majority vote. Plans are in place to design a new Fire/Rescue Facility in the same complex on Elm Street after the acquisition of conserved land adjacent to the site.
- Town Administrator Bartlett presented a collaborative project with the Town of Jaffrey that would acquire a 528ac site containing the Cold Stone Springs well site for another water supply, one that would replace Peterborough's South Well, taken out of service in 1982 due to contamination from New Hampshire Ball Bearing. This Warrant Article requesting the gross appropriation of \$8.26mil, contingent upon Jaffrey also approving the project and a Memorandum of Understanding, would cost municipal water users \$4,047,400 in fees. With drinking water security being a sound investment for the future, voters approved the Article with a 2/3rds affirmative vote.
- Department of Public Works Director Seth MacLean proposed the establishment of the Roadway System Upgrades Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of the orderly repair and replacement of our established roadway network, the upkeep of which is one of the largest drains on Peterborough's municipal budget. This is a \$4mil project spread over 10 years. Voters almost unanimously voted in the affirmative and the Article passed.

June - December

- The Historic Town House rehabilitation continued with replacement of the slate roof and gutter/downspout system. Compromised brickwork was mended and bids were in place for the painting of the interior of the upper hall and entryway.

- An application for a grant to offset the cost of constructing a Bus Stop down in the new RiverWalk parking lot off Grove Street was reauthorized by the Board in confidence that this future transportation need would enhance the economic vitality of our Downtown.
- Due to the growth of popularity and success of events that contribute to Our Town being “A Good Town to Live In” such as the Children And The Arts Parade & Festival of Lights, Thing in the Spring / Broke: the Affordable Arts Fair, Greenerborough, Living Local Arts Fair and the new Night Market sponsored by MAXT MakerSpace, etc, Town Administration has been working on a Special Events Policy in order to accommodate safe practices for all involved.
- The Board heard from concerned citizens in several neighborhoods regarding speeding vehicles throughout town. Under advice from Police Chief Guinard to lower speed limits and incorporate speed actuated digital signs, speed / traffic calming efforts were put in place on Hunt Road, High Street and Old Street Road.
- Progress is slow moving, but continued efforts are in play to spread Broadband access across the town. A utility grossly lacking in effectiveness for many of the underserved community, it is that much more highlighted in a time such as the current pandemic crisis when students and workers need their homes to be their work stations.
- Community Task Force on Housing established in August. Impressive turnout with close to 40 participants. This group has been meeting monthly and will continue to meet for the foreseeable future.
- The Town’s Recreation Department saw Lisa Betz promoted to the Director position following the termination of the former Director. The search for a new Program Director is expected to be completed in late March 2020.
- Legal engagements with respect to zoning, personnel, land use and liability ensued in 2019. Several issues are still pending in coordination with Town Counsel.
- The Board was able to reduce the New Hampshire Division of Revenue Administration’s recommended \$30.89 tax rate for 2020 down to \$29.75 by utilizing \$800k from the unassigned fund balance while still retaining a healthy 11.7% for emergencies.

Plans for 2020

- The Board is working on a plan to replace Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett, who we expect will announce his retirement to take effect at the end of 2020. The search will take place mid-year allowing for a smooth transition upon his departure.
- The Office of Community Development is losing Pete Throop, its Director. The search to fill that position is also high on the list of priorities.
- The Town of Peterborough website redesign has been an ongoing venture, one we look to seeing completed in the near future.

Graciously Submitted,

Tyler Ward, Chair
 Karen Hatcher
 Bill Taylor