

# SELECTBOARD REPORT

The Selectboard would like to take this opportunity to present a broader, multi-year perspective of the Town in this year's Selectboard Report. The following pages will hopefully provide an overview of how we did, highlights in the current year, and what we are looking towards into the future.

## I. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Every year at Town Meeting the time period that this report covers, the fiscal year from July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013, is the subject of conversation. Reviewing the money spent ending almost a year ago, while we are in the midst of another budget year (figures that are not included in the following pages), can be confusing and frustrating. The transition from using a calendar year accounting to the current fiscal year accounting took place in 1999. So, even though we are now in year 14 of the "new" system, the change is still questioned. Before the transition, it was a mad rush in January to put together the Town Report. Now, although perhaps this schedule is not ideal, the fiscal year does allow more flexibility to compile the year-end figures and summaries.

The extra months have been especially beneficial this year as our former Selectboard Assistant is trying very hard to retire. Since our new Selectboard Assistant has done the vast majority of the work to put this report together, learning "on the go", every available extra minute has been needed to get it print ready. It is not easy or quick to put together a book of more than 100 pages with information from all aspects of the Town, the School, the local community, and the services we benefit from in the County. Much thought and effort has gone into improving the format, readability, and hopefully, clarity of the more than 400 accounts that keep track of yearly expenses for the Town Office and Highway Department.

## II. FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2012, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013

### Whitney Lane Bridge, Flood May 2011

Flood events and the damage they do to roads and property have a significant impact on the Town's labor, materials, and equipment. When structures such as the Whitney Lane culvert need to be replaced, it is a huge project to evaluate potential options for remediation, especially when it did not qualify for FEMA funding, as the structure was not completely destroyed.

After the flood in 2011, an engineer was hired to determine what type of structure was needed; however, his estimate was cost prohibitive. Would building a road around instead of a bridge be a better option? When the proposals for the alternative road came in, the costs were equally expensive. Additional structure options were researched, which meant that soil borings needed to be done; at the present time, these options are waiting for State consideration and approval.

### New Equipment

A new John Deere loader with forks was purchased for \$92,050 after a working trial of the different machines. The JD model best served the needs of the Highway Department and was less expensive than the other option tested.

The Town was awarded a grant for new truck radios covering 100% of the costs.

A grant to install an emergency generator at the School was awarded in September 2012. The Town and School will collaborate and contribute equally to the costs of the project above the grant amount.

# SELECTBOARD REPORT (cont'd)

## Gifts

The American Gift Fund, a donor-advised charitable organization, awarded the Town of Eden \$75,331 in January of 2013. Heartfelt thanks go out to the donor, who obviously thinks very highly of our community and has made such a generous gift possible.

The Town received financial compensation from Green Mountain Power from the Good Neighbor Fund to the tune of \$5,644.38. Compensation from the Kingdom Community Wind Project was significantly less than was projected but welcome nonetheless.

## III. CURRENT YEAR JULY 1, 2013, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2014

### Wind Power

The Selectboard received paperwork from BNE Energy of Connecticut in reference to the test wind tower (now in pieces on the ground) located in the Bigelow Basin off Albany Road. This news created quite a stir, seemingly more in the media than in Town however. As the property tax bills were due to be distributed soon, a survey was created to include in the mailing. The results were informative, and it was helpful to hear the voice of so many taxpayers on the industrial wind issue. More respondents were against big wind than pro, but not by a huge margin. In addition there were hundreds of additional comments. Many respondents wanted better cell coverage!

Green Mountain Power has increased its production of electricity at the Kingdom Community Wind Project. Since the amount of money Eden receives from the Good Neighbor Fund is based on kilowatts generated, that is good news on the financial end for Eden. In February 2014, the Town received a check for \$45,711.53! This windfall (pun intended) can be used for projects in the future.

### E-911 Numbers: *Emergency responders need to know exactly where to turn to save your life!*

The North Hyde Park/Eden Fire Department has asked that the community identify all addresses with approved green, reflective, and numbered signs. The Fire Department and other emergency responders want to make sure that they can find you as quickly and easily as possible. It is easy to see the smoke from a fire when the impacted structure is right on a main road, but it is much harder to find the house in which the person suffering from a heart attack is gasping for air.

Signs are now available for purchase at cost and will be available at Town Meeting and at the Town Clerk's Office ongoing. Please support the people who risk their own lives to help save yours. If you or a neighbor needs help in mounting a sign, we can certainly make that happen. Signs will cost about \$6.00 and is the best insurance investment you can possibly make.

### Whitney Lane Bridge Project

At Town Meeting last year, Article #10 was approved with a vote of Yes-66 votes and No-27 votes. The article read:

*Shall the voters of Eden authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$200,000.00, to be financed over a period not to exceed five (5) years, to be used for the construction of the bridge on Whitney Lane?*

# SELECTBOARD REPORT (cont'd)

What this is saying is that we, as taxpayers, agree to increase the budget \$40,000 each year for five (5) years to set aside the approved funds. That \$40,000 should have been included in the budget pages and in the warning this year but was omitted by mistake. The Selectboard will ask to amend the Highway budget figure, increasing the total by \$40,000. If all goes as planned, construction of the new structure will happen in the summer of 2014.

## **The Generator at the School**

Installation and testing of the new generator at the Eden Central School is complete. The Town now has the ability to provide emergency shelter for the community, if needed, and the School can switch over to auxiliary power if the main system fails for any reason.

## **Our Canine Friends**

Believe it or not, the Selectboard spends a considerable amount of time at meetings discussing dogs. Wandering dogs, dog bites, unlicensed dogs, and more. The Town is responsible for making sure that all dogs are licensed and have a current rabies vaccine. Every year a rabies clinic is scheduled at the Town Garage in March. Licenses are also available the same day, so the process can be easy and inexpensive for everyone. Please help to make our Town safe for everyone, human and canine alike. Bring your animals in for a rabies vaccination, and let's get all dogs licensed!

## **Property Taxes and the Veterans' Exemption**

After the tax rate was set and the property tax bills were printed and mailed, a mistake was noted in the Town Tax rate, which included the veteran's exemption rate; however, the veteran's exemption (Local Agreement tax rate) was also listed as a separate line item on the tax bills. Please review the complete explanation, along with the calculations for setting the tax rates, on pages 9-12.

## **IV. LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

Despite the state of the national economy, with budget deficits, and the level of the debt ceiling an increasingly frequent topic of debate, Eden's financial health is extremely stable. Our continuing conservative approach to spending and a more aggressive pursuit in seeking grants has been fiscally beneficial to the community. Is there room for improvement? Of course, there is always room for improvement. Change is seldom easy, however. And, when we are talking about change in government, it takes time.

With the Town Plan now revised and regionally approved, this is an important tool. Grants are harder to find, and requirements are more stringent than ever before. One area of concern that the Selectboard has seen is that the State tends to mandate programs, but provides no means, or at best minimal support, to follow through with implementation of increasingly stringent regulations. The Clean Water Act is Federal legislation on which that the State is currently working. Their proposed policies will affect all towns, but no mention has been made regarding how small communities will pay for the changes with no support from Montpelier. All other towns in Lamoille County are in agreement on this issue - we simply cannot afford the gold standard. We are simply going to have to learn to do with less.

***Ricky Morin, Chair***

***Leslie White***

***Harold Morse***