

Selectmen's State of the Town

We hope this report will give you insight into some of the issues and events that took place in 2008, and some of the goals we hope to accomplish in 2009. As your elected officials and overseers of the Town's best interest and fiscal responsibilities, we present you the Selectmen's report subtitled in a mini-overview format, so that you may pick out the topics that interest you, in the event you are not inclined to read the full report.

Executive

Town Meetings – In March 2008, the Town adopted the provision of Senate Bill 2 (SB 2); the town meeting is now divided into two sessions. The First Session is commonly called the “Deliberative Session,” where voters can amend the budget and special articles. Changes can be made to all articles except those required by law to go on the ballot as written. Voters cannot amend Zoning and Building Code warrant articles at this session. The second session is Town Election Day where each registered voter votes by ballot on each item. The Deliberative Session is Feb. 2, 2009, and Town Election on March 10, 2009, with both being held at the EK Elementary School multi-purpose room.

We encourage voters to attend this first session of our annual town meeting.

Taxes – In March 2008, the Town also agreed to change to a twice a year tax billing process for property taxes. Tax bills will be sent out in July and December of 2009.

As we prepare this report, the tax bills have been sent out with a .62 cent increase over last year. The rate is \$22.88 versus last year at \$22.26, per \$1,000 assessed property value. Avitar, our Tax Assessors, will be conducting the Town's revaluation in 2009, per state requirements.

Town Employees and Volunteers

In our town, many of our employees need to be proficient in several areas.

Our Building Inspector is also our Code Enforcement Officer; our Health Officer is also our current Road Agent. Our Administrative Assistant is also our bookkeeper, our liaison with Legal Council and liaison for the Selectmen. Our Planning Board Secretary is also the Zoning Board of Adjustment Secretary. The Selectmen balance full time jobs while overseeing the buildings and maintenance projects, quotations for projects, town personnel matters, and scheduled meetings.

Because we are small in numbers, it is critical that each employee excel at his or her job. East Kingston is fortunate to have a Team of dedicated workers that work well together and are committed to the team concept and dedication to have a smoothly run town.

When we selectmen review our goals for the upcoming year, maintaining harmonious employee chemistry will continue to be a priority.

We also thank all the residents who have volunteered their time to various Town offices, committees and projects over this past year. It helps to make this Town a special place in which to live.

Department Heads

Fire Department – In April 2008, the Selectmen hired Salvatore “Sam” Richard as the new full time Fire Chief. After an extensive interview process with many candidates, background and reference checks, and fire department personnel feedback from the final candidates get together at the fire station, Fire Chief Richard was extended the position. During Sam's first year, he has accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time. I hope you take the time to read the Fire Chief's report.

The new Forestry Truck that was approved at the 2008 Town Meeting was received in September and in service by November.

Police Department - In 2008, Full Time Officer Mark Iannuccillo completed the Police Academy. The department has four (4) full time officers including Police Chief Reid Simpson.

Town Clerk – Tax Collector – 2008 was a challenging year with the numerous elections occurring, updated State computer systems, etc.

Road Agent – 2008 was a year of change within this department. After many years (30+), Robert “Bob” Rossi retired from the position at the end of June. We were saddened by his decision, as Bob knows this town inside and out as to our town roads. The Selectmen posted the position for interest in someone completing the elected position until March 2009. Mr. Rossi assisted us in the interview process of potential candidates to fill his remaining term. Matt Gallant was appointed July 1st to fill the vacancy until town election in March, 2009. Congratulations to Bob and Ann Rossi in their retirement.

Planning Board – March of 2008 was a change for the Planning Board, as Chair Roby Day, announced his decision to resign from the board. Cathy Belcher, Vice Chair, also announced that she would leave the Planning Board to focus on the Board of Adjustment (ZBA). Also completing one year of his three year term, long time board member Dick Smith, who has held various positions on the board decided to resign for health reasons. We thank him for over 27 years of continuous service on the Board. Also, Edward “Ted” Lloyd an alternate member, decided to resign at the end of March. We now have many new faces on the Planning Board, both full members and alternates. A complete list of names can be seen on the Towns web site at eknh.org, or in the front of the Town Report.

ZBA – The Zoning Board of Adjustment has also seen a change in members, and the cell tower issue remains in the distant background.

Recreation Committee – The Recreation Committee presented plans to the Selectmen for the renovation of Foss-Wasson field. The proposal would renovate the baseball field and add a soccer field. The funding is being generated by various fund raising activities. When the proposal and site plans are completed, they will be reviewed by the Planning Board and renovation activity is expected to begin in the spring of 2009.

Town Moderator – It is with deep regret, our Moderator, Mr. Larry Smith, passed away on November 28, 2008. During the past few months we have jointly researched new voting booths to replace the WWII vintage booths. The Town is required to have a specific number of booths per registered voters and we currently fall below that number which is the additional drive for the new booths.

Town Web Site

It's official, East Kingston now has it's official web site! The site was being developed this year with the help of Kathy Weise. The site address is eknh.org or Eastkingstonnh.org. The site contains town news, forms, meeting minutes from Selectmen, Planning Board and ZBA meetings. There are links to various Town Departments for information such as contacts, business hours, etc. We continue to improve the web site, and are adding more informative town news. If you have any comments about the web site, please contact the Town Offices, and they will relay the information to the town web site liaison.

Operating Budget

This year has been a challenge in regards to the operating budget due to the rising cost of fuel (gas, diesel, fuel oil and propane), along with rising costs of sand and salt that needed to be ordered in August. However, at year end, the town is looking at a positive budget finish.

Inventory of Taxable Property Values

2008 was the last year for the annual Inventory of Taxable Property, called the PA-28 form, which was due on April 1st of each year.

Legal

Barton L. Mayer of Upton & Hatfield, LLP, of Concord, NH serves as town counsel. Atty. Mayer was admitted to the New Hampshire bar in 1979, served as legal counsel for the New Hampshire Municipal

Association 1981-1986, and his areas of practice are municipal law, environmental law, and land use development.

We also consult with the staff attorneys at the Local Government Center (LGC) in Concord, NH for opinions on basic municipal law. The cost for this service is covered by the town's annual dues to this organization.

Government Buildings

Town Hall

Plans for the kitchen renovation were postponed due to budget constraints and the unscheduled replacement of the heating system. The Selectmen decided to winterize the building Nov. 15th to conserve heat and utility costs, and reopen the building on April 15, 2009.

The Wingold Grange has offered to replace the old and torn Town Hall curtains. Monies will be collected through fund raising.

Town Offices

2008 was challenging for this building. Greatly needed slate roofing repairs were partially completed to solve the roof leaks. Installation of efficient built-in a/c units were installed to replace all the individual window a/c units. Office lighting was upgraded to new efficient lights, and the Selectmen's Office and Town Clerk areas were re-painted. In April, the heating system quit working due to exhaust issues related to the old furnace and chimney. In 2009, the chimney will need repair, along with other building maintenance.

Police Department

2008 was a quiet year, as the new complex had no issues.

Fire Department

Challenge was the key word for this complex. The furnace in the main section needed to be replaced with a new oil burner. The second floor heating was one loop for all three rooms, and we changed this to two separate control zones thus eliminating the need to open windows during the winter because it was too hot. We added some safety lighting, both inside and outside, and replaced the outside meter panel, which was causing power failures within the complex. Added blown-in insulation was applied to the ceiling area. The Selectmen and Fire Department have created a building project-action list, which is shared with the Fire Association for possible co-funding. The list consists of short and long term building maintenance projects and will continue to be reviewed.

Library

The new complex is nearly completed. The building permit was issued on July 13, 2007 and an occupancy certificate was issued on January 23, 2008. The Library was in full operation by late March, 2008. The Library Trustees are completing the finishing touches, and should complete the bond closure by spring 2009.

Railroad Depot

In reviewing the fuel consumption of the past years, the Selectmen decided to winterize the building Nov. 15th to conserve heat and utility costs and reopen the building on April 15, 2009, or at the request of the Historical Committee at a later date. In winterizing the facility, it was noted that the hot water tank was leaking and will need to be replaced in 2009.

Pound School

Now with the new Library in service, the Pound School has a new use. The Selectmen have converted the building into a multi-purpose meeting room. We installed an additional 8 inches of blown insulation into the ceilings. The building now serves as the home for the Planning Board and ZBA meetings.

During the winter months, while the Town Hall is closed, the Grange, Historical Committee, and Recreation Committee will meet there also. The Friends of the Library co-share the building with these groups with the used book store.

The Selectmen have created a building project list, which consists of short and long term building maintenance projects and will be reviewed and updated. Due to budget constraints this year, the project list was placed on hold in October.

Highway Department

2008 gave us some challenges within the Highway Department along with high fuel and paving costs. Along with the retirement of Bob Rossi as Road Agent in July, and Matt Gallant filling the position, this accelerated the need for a salt shed by September. A joint decision was made to postpone some scheduled road maintenance and repairs to purchase a salt shed, as we could not wait until March 09 for the salt shed funding. After review of all town properties and approvals from the Conservation Committee and other organizations, the best-suited site was behind the Town Hall.

Solid Waste & Recycle

Waste Management continues to provide our weekly solid waste disposal and bi-weekly recycling for 2008 with minimum changes. 2009 will be our last year of the contract extension and will require the Selectmen to prepare for bids on both recycling and solid waste removal.

Health Department

Mosquito Control – In 2008, voters approved a warrant article for \$30,400 to contract with Dragon Mosquito Control of Stratham to provide larviciding throughout town. DMC sprayed at the East Kingston Elementary School grounds, ballpark, and Foss-Wasson field. Scores of sites were tested and all tests were negative for the Arboviral illnesses of the West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis.

Conservation Commission

Conservation Easements – The Conservation Commission has worked diligently to seek open space and conservation lands. In 2008, we closed on several conservation easements, and are nearing the end of the four million dollars that was approved at Town Meeting several years ago. Larry Smith, Committee Chair, has been driving this issue since the creation of the warrant article.

Welfare

2008 was a challenging year for welfare requests, and we believe 2009 will not be easier for our town residents.

We extend our thanks to you, the citizens and taxpayers of East Kingston for your support and confidence in our ability to guide our town, and wisely use your tax dollars.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert A. Caron, Chairman

Richard S. Poeleart

David R. Pendell, Jr.