

## **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER**

***Mark A. Pearson, Town Manager***

We completed the Public Safety Complex project on time and under budget. The \$8.5M project did have some challenges, but in the end, with valued engineering and proper project management oversight, most original design components were installed and a balance was left over that we continue to wrap up the project with. One of the major accomplishments was the purchase of the new dispatch communications radio equipment that saved the Town hundreds of thousands of dollars. At the end of 2018, dispatch radio software and equipment of the Radio Tower is being replaced. This state-of-the-art communications center dispatches for the Atkinson Police and Fire Departments, in addition to Plaistow Police and Fire Departments, and we renegotiated a five (5) year (2019 – 2024) contract which contributes to additional town revenue.



We are ***Moving Forward*** with the “Public Works Facility” and “Potable Water” in 2019.

The March 2018 Town Meeting approved a \$600,000 warrant article, out of the Unassigned Fund Balance, to construct a new pre-engineered steel Public Works Facility at 144 Main Street -- the old “Penn Box” site. This was the first phase to perform the site engineering and drainage, site work, foundation, erecting a steel building (80' x 100') with a mezzanine (20' x 100'), the connection to street power, septic system, fire suppression, rough plumbing, inside lighting, and inside construction of the utility room, locker room(s), bathroom(s), office partitions, and to go as far as the initial funding could go. At the time of this writing, the steel building is under construction and most of this will be completed by December 31, 2018, and will continue into 2019 by design through the original warrant article because of the non-lapsing clause. In 2019, we will be asking for the second phase funding of \$350,000 warrant article out of the Unassigned Fund Balance to substantially complete the building both interior and exterior. We look forward to 2020 and building a “Salt Shed” in conjunction with the Energy Committee while we look at the possibility of adding photovoltaic solar roof panels to the “shed” and potentially “net meter” electricity to the Public Works Facility, Town Hall and the Public Safety Complex.

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Potable Water Project. This was the framework to advance to an Inter-Municipality Agreement (IMA), which led to a Cost of Services (COS) Study and then finally to a proposed Joint Public Works Agreement (JPWA). I have been working on this project since I was hired in February of 2017. This project has consumed about 20-25% of my schedule with more than 75 meetings to date. The results will be financially enormous for the Town of Plaistow. Bringing potable water which originates in Manchester -- south through Derry, Windham, Salem and east through Atkinson to the Plaistow border by 2020 -- will



## **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER**

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remediate MtBE contaminated wells, circulate potable water through the existing infrastructure of the fire suppression system by replacing and sanitizing the system, and provide opportunities and choices to the residents both short and long term with respect to water quantity and quality. We anticipate having more information, and as we receive it we will report it to the residents on the cost(s) of potable water per cubic foot (748 gallons) in the coming months. We should also be reporting the final amount of State Funds that will be granted to the Town to start construction as soon as possible.

The Town purchased a “used” Holder Trackless Sidewalk Plow and developed a sidewalk plowing policy with the Board of Selectmen for all the sidewalks in Plaistow. This initiative started as a result of a contractual mandate to clear and maintain parts of the sidewalks on Route 125 and the newly constructed Safe Routes to Schools project on Main Street. The Highway Department received the resignation of a full-time Highway Department laborer and hired a part-time seasonal worker to replace as a laborer. We were also fortunate to hire a replacement part-time Highway Department laborer. These Town employees also serve as part-time Water Department workers at times of waterline breaks, maintenance and repairs.

The March 2018 storm caused severe power outages in Plaistow, the cost of the storm was over \$50,000 to the budget. We staged and accommodated more than 160 Unitil and out-of-state crews at the Safety Complex. Through the State and Federal Government, we applied for a Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) reimbursement and anticipate almost a 75% reimbursement, which will go back to the Unassigned Fund Balance.

The Fire Department hired a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) full-time firefighter as a result of another 2018 Warrant Article approval. This additional firefighter allowed the schedule to increase full-time coverage seven (7) days a week during the day, 6am – 6pm. This was the idea of Chief John McArdle who demonstrated the need to the Board of Selectmen, the Budget Committee and the voters that this was needed and was very well received.

During the spring of 2018, the P.A.R.C. main building sustained a sewerage back-up inside the building from soil pipes that settled and no longer pitched to the tank. The cost to fix the problem and remediate was approximately \$25,000. This major project was unanticipated and was paid for out the Contingency Fund which was another 2018 Warrant Article. During the remainder of the year we had a few other unanticipated costs that were also approved by the Board of Selectmen, including the furnace at the Historical Society building, the remediation of a buried oil tank at the “old Penn Box” site, a water pipe break during the Public Works Facility construction, and the severance costs for the retirements of the Fire Chief and Police Chief.

The Westville Road Bridge Replacement Project only had two (2) bidders in 2018 and was nearly \$300,000 over the State Bridge Aid and Town Funding. This project will be re-bid in the Spring of 2019. We hope that the early 2019 bidding will attract more competitive bids and meet the approved funding which has already been reserved



## **REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER**

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In October, the Board of Selectmen hired a new Emergency Management Director who has started to coordinate with the Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT) and become a more viable resource in times of need. In October, we established a plan going forward to maintain the P.A.R.C. fields by hiring a contractor to cut and clear the brush in the swales. This was followed up with funding plan in 2019 to continue to work to resolve the drainage of large amounts of water from the fields.

In November, we hired a Planning Director to move the whole planning processes to the next level. We are looking to the future of economic development in Plaistow as we plan for potable water on Route 125 and other developable parcels.

I have been very fortunate to have the support of the Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, other town committees, the employees and department heads, the residents and the businesses in Plaistow during my tenure thus far in Plaistow. I hope to serve in my capacity into the future and look forward to completing many more projects while balancing the financial budgeting framework of the town.

Finally, I would like to thank all the town employees and department heads who work every day to keep the town running. There are many dedicated employees who go unnoticed and whom I want to recognize for all their hard work over this past year to make all this happen. Both Fire Chief John McArdle and Police Chief Kathleen Jones, submitted their retirement intentions for the end of this year, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018. I want to congratulate them on a job well done, and wish them both a happy retirement. They both made sure that the Public Safety Complex was completed before they left which brought the Town to the next level.

