

BOARD OF SELECTMAN

“May you live in interesting times.”

Chinese proverb – and curse

In keeping with the proverb, 2007 was a VERY interesting year for the Town of Hamilton. Some was good, some was bad, and some has yet to be determined.

Very much on the plus side, the long sought for Public Safety Building was finished. The beautiful new facility was completed and the Police, Fire and ECO Departments moved in to their new quarters in April. The building was formally dedicated in September and will serve the Departments and citizens well for generations. Thanks to the Public Safety Building Committee, the three Department Heads and all who helped to bring this project to fruition.

In December, after Special Town Meeting authorization, the selectmen enacted a Waste Reduction Program. By the time you read this, the program will have been up and running for about 6 weeks. Under the program, each household is allowed one bag or barrel of trash within the tax levy weekly. Specially marked bags must be purchased and used for additional trash. The hope and expectation is that this will encourage recycling which in addition to being good for the environment, will save the town a significant amount in tipping fees.

The Town’s long time Director of Public Works, Steve Kenney, resigned at the end of July to take a similar position in Manchester-by-the-Sea. We knew that the search for a replacement for this important position would take many months. After considering different models, we determined that, with the help of some consulting by Steve the DPW employees could more than adequately run the department on an interim basis. Many thanks to the DPW and Water Enterprise employees, particularly Rich Campana and Tim Shea who helped get us through this difficult period. We have now hired a very capable replacement, John Tomasz, who started work in mid-April.

Last spring’s Town Meeting and Ballot dealt with a number of important issues. It had become increasingly difficult to attain a quorum of 150 registered voters for Town Meetings, particularly for Special Town Meetings in the Fall. After considering a number of options, including having no quorum requirement, Town Meeting voted to lower the quorum for Town Meetings to 75. The Selectmen certainly understand the pressures of modern life on voters but continue to believe that Town Meeting is a form of democracy worth nurturing and preserving.

After a year of study by a committee composed of representatives of many constituencies, a revised Senior Housing By-Law was voted on by Town Meeting. After vigorous debate, it did not attain the required 2/3 vote for a zoning change, but will be resubmitted this year.

At the ballot, an override for the schools in the amount of \$340,121 passed, but debt exclusions for a police cruiser, and vehicles for the public works and Fire Departments were not approved.

“May you come to the attention of those in authority.”

Second Chinese proverb

The Town has continued to litigate its Water Withdrawal Permit with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Also, this year the town's registered allotment under the Water Management Act was renewed with conditions. On the advice of Special Counsel, the Selectmen voted to appeal the renewal of its protected Water Registration with those conditions.

The Selectmen have not embarked on this course lightly. We are well aware of the costs associated with litigation. However, we believe that there are important long term town interests and property rights which need to be protected.

“May you find what you are looking for.”

Third Chinese proverb

For most of this decade, Towns like Hamilton have struggled to provide town and school services while endeavoring to alleviate the rise in the tax burden. There are many factors which have put us in this pass, but a failure of state aid to keep up with rising costs – and increased mandates – is a major one. The primary focus of the Selectmen over the past year has been the search for additional revenues and the more efficient delivery of services. Either on our own, or in concert with other committees such as the Landfill Committee, Economic Development Committee and Housing Partnership Committee, we have and continue to explore everything from windmills to commercial development to shared services.

In preparing this report, I reviewed the Selectmen's reports for the past two years. Some projects and initiatives such as the Public Safety Building and the World War II Memorial have been completed. Some were still being worked on last year and will be in the next. And of course there are some new ones. With all there is to do, progress has been made on most of them. None of this could happen without the dedicated employees and volunteers on our Town Boards and Committees. As citizens we owe them all our thanks.

William F. Bowler, Chairman