

Ashburnham Selectmen's Annual Report 2007

To the Citizens of Ashburnham,

This past year has been a very busy one. In July we wished Kevin Paicos, our Town Administrator, well as he was deployed to Afghanistan for the year. We look forward to his safe return in July. In the meantime, we welcomed Paul Boushell as interim Town Administrator in Kevin's absence.

Ashburnham has spent the past year "under construction." We witnessed Senator Brewer carrying former Selectmen Reed in a wheelbarrow to close out the Page's Beach project, a project that took 9 years to come to fruition. We also need to thank MRPC for their participation. We witnessed the much needed waterline installation down Route 12 towards Fitchburg with all the water connections completed. This area had been contaminated by MBTE, which put many wells on individual filtration systems. This was the first time in State history where a project was accomplished in this manner. An incredible amount of cooperation between Kevin, Senator Brewer and C.J. Doherty Construction Co. was required to get this completed; there were many trips into Boston on behalf of Ashburnham. Selectman Dennehy should also be commended for the time he put into this project. Clearly, without this level of cooperation, this project would have never been completed and with such speed.

Two major building projects are in process. Our Town Hall has gone through quite a metamorphosis. The Cupola is now secured, without the fear of it falling off the building, and much needed updates and renovations have been implemented. We look forward to moving back into our "home," hopefully in May. We are very grateful for the committee's hard work that was involved in getting this project completed. We are also grateful for the work that the DPW and Light Department did on this project. In addition, we appreciate the school district's hospitality for housing our Town Hall while these renovations took place. The other major project is the new Ashburnham Public Safety Facility. Work continues with a projected move in date sometime in August/September. Again, we would like to express our gratitude for Chris Gagnon and the committee's hard work on this project, and continued thanks to Cushing Academy, not only for their additional contribution, but also for housing our various pieces of fire apparatus.

The DPW has continued their diligent work replacing culverts and maintenance on our roads. We took some very hard hits in the form of weather that affected significant damage. For the first time in Ashburnham, we now have a comprehensive road plan, one that will continue to be updated. We also have been awarded a low cost loan for water tank and main replacement. The DPW has experienced a very tough winter and we thank them for this endless responsibility.

We are grateful for the many hardworking volunteers who continue to give their valuable time to Ashburnham. Recently, we have formed a committee to review our downtown area to make it more conducive for business. Other committees that continue their hard work are the Affordable Housing Committee and The Focus Committee, which is concentrating on the relocation of the Town Barn. The Briggs Elementary School

Building Committee continues to do their work toward a new school; recently, Ashburnham has been awarded a grant to pay a portion of the study required from the Commonwealth. The Ashburnham Land Trust continues to secure and protect many acres of land working on a shoestring budget, which will be our legacy to future generations. A Wind Tower By-Law is also being developed. We are blessed to have many hard working volunteers that continue to serve our town. At any given time we have openings on various boards and committees and we invite our fellow citizens to join any of them.

Ashburnham will soon have our first 40B Project. This is a partnership between the town and a developer, Mark Dymek, who shares in the profits from the project. The installation of the Nextel Tower is the first tower for Ashburnham that is on town property, which will be an ongoing revenue source for our Public Safety Departments. The tower will house our Public Safety antennas.

Our Town Hall staff continues to work hard in many areas. This past year was particularly difficult for them, as they had to relocate to their temporary quarters at Oakmont. A significant number of records were sorted and packed away until their return to the Town Hall. Our financial staff continues to do a very good job of collecting past taxes. We now have our brand new website online along with the ability for people to pay their tax bills over the Internet. We owe a former past resident, Ken Dolder, a debt of gratitude for his hard work with this transition. We welcome Denee Howard to the position of Land Use Clerk. These employees of the Town Hall continue to help Ashburnham run smoothly. This past year has not been easy for them. Finally, as always, we are grateful for Sylvia Turcotte, our Assistant Town Administrator who keeps us all organized.

We still have many challenges that face us. We will continue to struggle with the unfunded mandates that are handed down to us from the Commonwealth, which is mired in the never-ending uncertainty of state funding. Our schools and roads are just two of these challenges. In addition, we need to look to the future and be better stewards of our buildings. Our 100-year water system is in need of attention; in just a few short years we will have to renew our sewage agreement with Gardner or seek alternatives. We need to continue to look at other innovative sources of income for this town to take some the burden off the backs of our residents. We also need to provide more housing for our elderly so if they sell their homes, they can remain in Ashburnham.

It is an honor and a privilege for the three of us to serve our town and citizens. Although much has been accomplished, much still needs to be done. We can only achieve this through our citizens' trust and support.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark H. Carlisle, Chairman
Christopher J. Gagnon, Clerk
Jonathan M. Dennehy, Member