

## **Board of Selectmen 2009 Annual Report**

To the Citizens of Ashburnham:

Following the April 28, 2009 Town Election, the Board of Selectmen met and organized, electing Edward J. Vitone, Jr., Chairman, Margaret Whitney, Clerk and Jonathan Dennehy, Member.

The Board worked with Interim Town Administrator Norman E. Thidemann until the Board unanimously approved Douglas C. Briggs as Town Administrator of the Town of Ashburnham, as provided by Section 5 of an “Act Establishing a Selectmen-Administrator Form of Government”. The Search Committee – Chairman Jeff Lawrence, Barbara “Pixie” Brennan, Barbara Brown, Joe Daigle, Gail Dumont, James Kreidler, John MacMillan, Dottie Munroe, Ron Reed, Dave Sargent and Sylvia Turcotte – worked hard to select and present three qualified individuals from a pool of over 45 applicants to the Board to select a Town Administrator.

During the past year the Board has:

- Attended a self-assessment off-site retreat with Interim Town Administrator Norman Thidemann as the professional facilitator.
- Signed a Board of Selectmen “Code of Conduct”.
- Established a system to track action items assigned to the Board of Selectmen, aka “Board of Selectmen” – to date 153 tasks have been assigned with 144 completed: (94% completion) with 9 tasks remaining.
- Established goals and objectives for the Town Administrator.
- Found a winter home to hold Board of Selectmen meetings – the Public Safety Building (PSB) – with consideration to transition to the PSB as a permanent home for the Board of Selectmen meetings.
- Implemented “Short Term/Long Term Insurance” for non-union employees, thanks to the unanimous vote at the November 30, 2009 Special Town Meeting.
- Revamped and relocated the Town’s computer room to the second floor due to a serious flood in the Town Hall basement that damaged the Town’s computer system.
- Repaired two significant leaks on the Fairbanks Memorial Town Hall roof which was a result of the December Ice Storm.
- Continued with the Special Act Study Committee to update the 1986 Special Acts that governs the Town Administrator form of government (started by the previous board).
- Continued with the Capital Planning Committee to review capital needs and establish a five-year plan (started previous year by citizen’s petition).
- Formed the IT Study Committee to update computer policy and review inventory of systems and also formed the Tax Base Study Committee to find ways to bring in revenue for the Town.
- Implemented new policies – Vehicle and Building Use Policies.
- Received monthly reports from Department Heads.
- Implemented ORHS students participation on Town Boards and Committees.
- Worked with Bresnahan Scout Committee to designate the former Caouette site as the new location to house the Scout House subject to Town Meeting approval.
- Voted to pursue a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to renovate the Veteran’s Memorial School building which houses the Council on Aging.

- Voted to have the Conservation Trust work to protect approximately 170 acres of land on Mt. Hunger.
- Worked with the Treasurer and Assessors to sell foreclosed Town-owned land (realized \$91,000) to have land return to the tax rolls and generate revenue.
- Moved water trough from the former Victorian House Restaurant property to Town property.
- Researched “Wind Energy” support funding to Senator Steve Brewer.
- Continue to have Selectman representation on the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
- Invited State Rep. Robert Rice and State Senator Steve Brewer to attend BOS meeting to present an update on state issues.
- Participated in the Westminster 250<sup>th</sup> Parade Celebration.
- Completed the National Incident Management System (NIMS) certification and Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees.
- Work in a transparent manner to distribute information via the Town’s website.

The fiscal year of 2009-2010 was another economically difficult year. Budgets were cut to reflect a “mean and lean” operation, and the Town of Ashburnham is running on bare bones.

We are expecting continued financial pressure in FY11 but the steps taken this year should help the Town weather the storm. The Board realizes how painful the budget process is for the Department Heads and Committees and we appreciate the endless hours they spent trying to be creative with financing and delivering governmental services with significantly reduced funding.

With the resignation of Public Works Director Donald Ouellette, who accepted a similar position in Wayland, MA, Highway Superintendent Steve Nims and Water and Sewer Superintendent Mark Petersen have assumed the responsibilities without missing a beat.

The Board expresses their gratitude to the Department Heads, Town Boards and Committees for their accomplishments during the year. Please take the time to read their individual reports. It should be noted that these Boards and Committees are composed of volunteers who put in many long hours of their free time to work on issues and projects that benefit the Town of Ashburnham. The Board acknowledges with our thanks, the cooperation we have received from our Town Officials, Town Employees and the Townspeople. We are grateful for the Assistant to the Town Administrator, Sylvia Turcotte for her hard work and professionalism. She is always ready to give us a helping hand.

At the November 17, 2009 Board of Selectmen meeting, Board Member, Jonathan Dennehy notified the Board of his resignation effective December 31, 2009 to take a position as a foreign service officer with the United States in Washington DC. The job will require him to travel to different locations around the globe which would not allow him to finish his term. The Board of Selectmen voted not to hold a special election for the remainder of Mr. Dennehy’s seat that would have ended his second term in April 2010. The Board cited the cost and the short timeframe prior to the annual April Town Election. During the Board of Selectmen meeting on December 21, 2009 a farewell gathering was held in honor of Mr. Dennehy to thank him for his years of service and to wish him well on his new endeavor.

We can and must look beyond our current financial limits to solve problems. As President Lincoln said in 1862, “We must think anew. The next few years will not be without pain, but we can prevail.”

Respectfully submitted,  
Margaret Whitney for the Board of Selectmen  
Edward T. Vitone, Jr., Chair  
Margaret Whitney, Clerk  
Jonathan M. Dennehy, Member