

## Town Administrator 2012 Annual Report

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To the Honorable Board of Selectmen and the Citizens of the Town of Ashburnham, I submit my fourth annual report as Town Administrator.

Much has changed in the year 2012 yet much stayed the same. While the year continued to see tough economic times our goal stayed steady, “to operate within budget, remain committed to a high level of customer service, with high ethical conduct”.

After several years of planning we constructed, with funds from our water users and a 45% matching grant from the USDA worth \$1,255,000, a million gallon water storage tank which was erected on the top of Meetinghouse Hill. This project became

mandatory as our 400,000 gallon storage tank built in 1910 was becoming a hazard. The new tank ensures enough water capacity storage for emergency requirements as well as future potential growth within the system.

Our dream to move the DPW facility from the center of town making way for a Cultural District, took a big step forward as the Town voted to take by virtue of eminent domain a 41 acre parcel of land from the Garlick Estate on Williams Road as a future site for the DPW facility. Once the property ownership has been exchanged we will come to the Town with a plan to clear the property and start plans to build the new home of the Department of Public Works.

There was a resurgence of our Parks and Recreation Committee which for many years had no available funds to make improvements. The Committee solicited donations and received monies at town meeting to install fencing, new equipment, repair equipment, make improvements to the basketball court and bring forward the “WinterFest” and “Tree Lighting Ceremony” as added activities for the community. Through the support of the Light Department, telephone poles were removed from Main Street in front of Town Hall, and with the tree lighting, a new excitement and community value was felt in the center of Town.

Information Technology (IT) has brought new meaning to all of our lives and with the support of Town Meeting the Public Safety Building (PSB), Town Hall, DPW, and Library were all connected with Fiber. Once the project is completed, it will enable those Town buildings to work as one. With the emergency power backup at the PSB our systems will always have power and with networking technology all departments will be able to take full advantage of our systems. This will allow Town resources to be directed to the ever-changing governmental requirements of our Town.

We also had two big road projects. The first was the reclamation of Route 101 north from the center of Town to just short of Route 119. This was a two million dollar project through a grant from the Department of Transportation (DOT) coupled with monies voted at Town Meeting. The completion of this project will save many front ends with clear sailing all the way up Route 101 north.

Our second project was the reclaiming of South Main Street. This route is heavily traveled by school buses and vehicles going to our schools or cutting over to Westminster. The Town spent \$300,000 of Chapter 90 monies to complete the much needed repairs. In the spring the project will be completed by finishing the sidewalks.

As part of our never-ending review of assets it was determined that the old fire station on South Main Street was no longer needed by the Town. By virtue of Town Meeting vote, permission was given to the Board to sell the building. This would remove any costs associated with owning the facility and increase revenue generation of new property taxes.

Looking for new revenues with the ever decreasing support from the State led us in other directions. The Town was approached by a vendor "ten-K-energy" that was looking to install photovoltaic (solar) panels and they were requesting a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement. Since we had a template set from our first PILOT agreement it was a relatively quick negotiations. We signed a tentative agreement, subject to town meeting approval, for a 3-Mega Watt hour facility.

The projected income will be \$60,000 per year for a 20-year period in new revenue.

Public Safety was assisted this year by Cushing Academy. They, in an effort to add Police coverage to off-shifts pledged a three-year commitment to cover all costs associated with the addition of one patrolman. This commitment will be reviewed every year to be extended for three years.

Regionalization was a high priority of ours and sadly after a one-year agreement as Ashby's Town Administrator it came to an end. Coupled with this agreement was that the two towns would look for other opportunities for regionalization. Dispatch was a great fit, and would have ensured better overall coverage for both towns and save money. In the end, Ashby did not feel that the savings warranted possible employee displacement and/or giving up the hometown control of their operations.

With Town Meeting approval of Capital funds, we replaced all the windows of the lower level of Town Hall that were rotting out due to age and moisture. We also brought the boiler room up to code at Town Hall and we have commissioned Monty Tech to build a shed for Town Hall. The shed presently located behind Town Hall is falling apart and is used for storage of the snowblower, lawnmower and other tools for the custodian's use. We thank the voters for their approval.

In January at the MMA Annual Meeting, I accepted the second place award in Category II (population 5,000 to 12,499) for Ashburnham's 2011 Annual Town Report. This award is given out each year by the MMA in consideration of layout and design, quality and depth of information, organization, originality, and overall usefulness of the report to residents. Sylvia Turcotte works hard each year in putting the annual report together and it is nice to see recognition for that great work.

Our goal is to look each and every day for opportunities to improve the quality of life in Ashburnham. We are here every day to work for you. My office is always open to every one of you. I want to thank the employees of the Town of Ashburnham, their dedication and commitment to the people of Ashburnham inspires me and working with them makes coming to work a pleasure.

Respectively submitted,  
Doug Briggs  
Town Administrator