

Town Administrator 2010 Annual Report



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

The year 2010 represented my first full year as Town Administrator and I have been extremely fortunate in the last 12 months to have worked with such a very talented and dedicated staff. Sylvia Turcotte, the Assistant to the Town Administrator, is an integral part of the management team. Her work ethic, dedication, and continued support insured my transition into the managerial and political environment.

During 2010, many of the changes and improvements started in 2009 were incorporated to bring financial stability and cohesive management. Goals and Objectives were established for each department, and with that fresh view several improvements were made as outlined below.

Improvements

Cost Savings

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Identified school funding assessment change from Alternate to Statutory Method. | \$ 335,000 |
| 2. Internally generated RFP for services which established a competitive environment and optimized savings while enhancing services. | |
| a. Insurance – MIIA for property and liability | \$ 60,000 |
| b. IT Services – Guardian Technology | |
| c. Engineering Services (DPW, Water and Sewer) Tighe & Bond and Weston and Sampson (RFP's for projects are only between these two companies, eliminating the costly bidding and advertising process.) | \$ 10,000 |
| d. Banking services – three firms represent different services | |

- e. Stevens Building Lease – Piano Museum
 - f. Bresnahan property for scouting activities
 - g. Sand and salt purchasing with Westminster \$ 45,000
3. Hired a collection agency for uncollected ambulance services that Coastal Billing is not able to secure. TBD
4. Applied for and received in conjunction with Light Dept. and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant for \$150,000 to install photovoltaic panels to reduce electrical Cost at the Public Safety Building \$ 11,000
5. Applied for a CDBG Grant through MRPC for engineering for \$400,000 for the design of a Senior Center at the (VMS Building) Veterans Memorial School and Housing Rehabilitation projects (7) for low income residents in the selected target area. April timeframe for acceptance. \$ 400,000
6. Applied for and received a grant for the design, construction, and installation of a new 1 million gallon water storage tank and associated improvements, and the refurbishing of the water tank on Gardner Hill. \$1,425,000

While there were improvements and cost savings of **\$500,000** and **\$2,000,000** in grants, there are also many changes that generate less tangible cost, but equally valuable benefits. This is a direct result of the teamwork environment that filters down from the Board of Selectmen, through transparency, and a willingness to work together which has brought leadership to Ashburnham.

The revitalization of the Capital Planning Committee has set forth a schedule where all Department Heads can request capital items that now will be funded through the budget and not depend on “free cash”. This has eliminated the rush of departments to try and get their share of the “money”.

The Town’s financial stability has improved. Our balance in unreserved cash was **\$207,537 in FY09**. At the end of FY10 it had grown to **\$683,794**, which is a 300% increase in our Stabilization and Capital Funds. This is about 5% of our operating budget, and will hopefully continue to grow.

The creation of a financial team (Town Administrator, Accountant, Treasurer, Collector, and Assessor – RRG) has reinforced the communication required for timely and accurate reporting.

- a. Treasurer and Accountant reconcile cash monthly
- b. Tax rate was certified in one day versus weeks.
- c. Free cash was certified in a timely fashion
- d. DOR has rescinded all of their mandates knowing Town has competent management.
- e. Received an extremely positive audit for FY10.

As the team was working on improvements they also had to deal with the financial aftermath of the Ice Storm of 2008, flooding of Town Hall, and the flooding of 2010. With the cooperation of the departments involved we are assured that we received the maximum reimbursement allowed by both government agencies and insurance companies.

Our Town's financial strength and stability allows us to look to the future for opportunities in the form of regionalization and economic growth.

Regionalizing has proven to be a challenge as hometown feel is important, but service and value are just as important. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel and regardless of the opportunity we will insure that it makes sense for Ashburnham.

Economic growth looks to be in the form of renewable energy. Many exciting and diverse opportunities await us and timing is becoming a very important factor in the return on investment. I am also looking for alternative sites for the relocation of the DPW to further downtown development.

The balance of FY11 and going forward in FY12 look to be an exciting opportunity for Ashburnham and a welcome challenge for me and my team.

Also, a very special debt of gratitude is owed to the residents who volunteer countless hours of their valuable time to serve on boards and committees. Their dedication is invaluable and appreciated.

I look forward with much enthusiasm to continue to serve the residents of Ashburnham in the coming year with an open door policy.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Briggs
Town Administrator