

The Town of Durham in Forward Motion

The Town of Durham has been tightening its proverbial belt for several years. In fact, our taxes have been frozen for three years. As we begin FY10-11 budget preparation, we are challenged once again to hold the line. I am encouraged that most budgets have come in the same or under last year. However, the increases that we face in some areas such as health care are significant. We pledge to do our best and welcome any input from the public.

That being said, I am proud to announce that even though we have asked our boards, commissions and town departments to cut back, we still have managed to make progress and continue to move in forward motion. Due to the enthusiasm, talent and ingenuity of our employees and volunteers, we are meeting our responsibilities and actually creating new initiatives and programs.

Here is a list of some of our accomplishments. The recreation department has added new programs for youth and adults, including some celebratory contests among town hall employees. The finance department has added a purchase order system that will be fully operational for the next fiscal year. The land record management software has been upgraded in the Town Clerk's office which will position us well for online searches and transactions in the future. The Chiefs of Fire, EMS and Emergency Management have all recruited new members and increased services to include an Emergency Notification System, Animal Response Team, equipment upgrades and replacements. Our Ambulance Corps celebrated another year that they did not have to pass a call due to lack of personnel. The Public Works Department has also made significant progress in several areas. They have averaged 4 major road projects in each of the past 3 budget years, eliminated a 5-year backlog of curb replacements, and implemented an in-service training program and street sign replacement program. The building official has assumed the role of Facilities Manager and we are well underway in creating a comprehensive plan to maintain our town properties. Our Assistant Health Director has provided greater access to flu vaccines by enhancing our partnership with our regional health organizations. The library continues to service an ever-increasing utilization rate and has enhanced many programs which were enhanced by their latest renovation of the front desk and computer area.

Our volunteer elected and appointed boards are also moving in forward motion, some of which have no town budget. The Ethics Commission succeeded in passing the very first Code of Ethics that town officials must abide. The Agriculture Commission is well on its way to creating an inventory of agricultural assets of the town. The Conservation Commission was an active participant in saving another farm from development by helping secure a conservation easement with the CT Farmland Trust and organized several work parties to clean up White's Farm. The Clean Energy Task Force has created a draft Comprehensive Energy Plan for the town. We will soon complete the Phase I design of a new Emergency Services Complex renovation lead by a very talented renovation committee.

There is not enough space for me to list all of the good work being done and apologize for leaving anything out. My intention was to illustrate that it is possible to be fiscally conservative and progressive at the same time. They are not mutually exclusive premises. I ask for your continued support and input which is critical to keep the Town of Durham in forward motion!