

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Kenneth F. Troup, Chairman2004
Richard H. Heaton, Jr.2005
Stanley Wysocki.....2006

Stan Wysocki, Dick Heaton, Ken Troup

The first half of 2003 was dominated by budget and finance issues at the school district, state government, and town of Bolton. We survived these problems relatively intact, through a lot of hard work by David Bosselait working with the selectmen, accountant, and Advisory Committee members. The latter part of the year the selectmen spent working with various groups toward improvement of the operation of the town government and the way we serve the public.

Town Administrator Position. Jim Anker retired after two terms as selectman and was replaced by Stan Wysocki, Planning Board chairman at the time of his election. While we miss Jim's steady hand and experience and appreciate his six years of service, we are fortunate that he takes over as Town Moderator. By mutual agreement, the selectmen did not renew David DeManche's contract as town coordinator. The board then decided in the late summer to employ a consultant to work with the town on a search and potential upgrade of the position. The net result was the hiring of Future Management Systems and the appointment of a 13-person search committee to look for a town administrator with more comprehensive duties, responsibilities, and authority than the town coordinator had had. Just as the calendar year ended, the selectmen offered the job of town administrator to Jodi Ross of Westborough. A special town meeting in early January 2004 added the new position to the bylaws. We are optimistic that 2004 will bring marked improvement in the administration of town affairs.

Improving Town Hall Operations. Also during the fall, the selectmen hired Future Management Systems to assist us with improving customer service provided by the departments in the Town Hall. FMS interviewed 27 town employees, administered Myers-Briggs styles tests, and conducted a town-wide customer satisfaction survey. They made a number of recommendations that we intend to begin implementing during 2004. These include being open more hours per week.

Difficult Budget Process. The FY2004 budget developed and approved in the spring of 2003 was particularly difficult because of actions needed to fix the school system's financial problems. The deficit bond approved by the state legislature in 2002 when the Finance Advisory Board was created to oversee school finances was funded in the FY04 budget; a new financial position was created in the school system; also the three towns created an audit advisory committee to oversee the restoration of financial health now and when the Finance Advisory Board is disbanded. Cuts in local aid to the towns and the school system, coupled with proposals to change the way schools are funded by the state, created uncertainty throughout the budget preparation process. Related to these budget uncertainties, the selectmen hosted a Tri-Town meeting with Stow, Lancaster, the Nashoba School district, and several state legislators, attended by more than 100 citizens. In the end, the selectmen and Advisory Committee concluded that an override of \$250,000 was needed to balance the FY2004 budget. Although we were pleased that override passed, as the summer unfolded additional money was received from the state by the school district and the district ended its fiscal year in June with an unexpected surplus. The result was unanticipated reductions in Bolton's costs and therefore we did not need to use the tax levy capacity of the \$250,000 override. We anticipate more stability in the next budget cycle and are pleased that the school district is rapidly returning to financial health.

Capital Budgeting Process. During the latter part of 2003, the selectmen, Advisory Committee, and Long Range Planning Committee worked on a capital budgeting process that we hope will allow us to better plan for the many municipal building projects that the town faces in the next 15 years. The consensus of these groups is that the long term debt load of the town is higher than desirable. The long list of projects for police, library, school, municipal building and open space needs is beyond our capacity to purchase in the near term. This means that priorities are going to have to be established with recommendations to the town meeting as to which projects should be funded first. An initial set of priorities was defined in December 2003. Beginning in November 2004, the capital budgeting process will become part of the annual budget planning cycle.

Senior Housing. The selectmen were pleased to participate in the groundbreaking for the long awaited senior housing project on Flatley Field. We congratulate and thank Kevin O'Brien and his group for their tireless efforts in bringing this project to the construction stage.

New Police Station Task Force. After the defeat of the police station citizens' petition at the annual town meeting, the selectmen worked with proponents and interested citizens to determine the proper course of action for the future. A new police station task force with selectman, Advisory Committee, and Long Range Planning Committee participation was formed and met throughout the latter half of the year. Its goal is to re-examine the information compiled by the previous committee and bring a recommendation to a future town meeting.

Miscellaneous Actions. Other areas in which the selectmen participated included the proposed demolition of the condemned building at 440 South Bolton Road, discussion of potential sites for affordable housing in town including a suggestion of use of the Moen parcel for an affordable multi-family dwelling, and an addition to the Winery property to allow additional events under cover but with noise-related restrictions. The town meeting approved and the selectmen appointed a new permanent Public Works Safety Committee to replace the Main Street Safety Group and to work with the selectmen and Department of Public Works on safety improvements on all roads in Bolton. As a follow up to town meeting actions, the selectmen worked with the Personnel Committee and Town Clerk to investigate and recommend the appropriate salary level for the town clerk.

Thank You Linda and others. The selectmen wish to thank Alice Roemer and Anne Kingan for their service on the school committee and also appreciate the volunteer service of all those who have retired from their appointed board or committee positions. We particularly wish to thank Linda Day for her extra efforts for us after the departure of the town coordinator. We look forward to improved communications among the selectmen and other boards and committees with our new town administrator Jodi Ross joining Linda on the job. If you have any questions or need to talk with a selectman, please contact any one of us or Jodi Ross, who is in the Town Hall five days a week. You can also find out more about what the selectmen and other boards are doing on the improved town web site at www.townofbolton.com.

Financial Statement
July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003

Salary

Appropriated	\$900.00
Expended	<u>\$300.00</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund	\$600.00

Expenses

Appropriated		\$32,332.68
Expended	Professional Services	218.50
	Engineering	1,987.00
	Supplies	303.07
	Miscellaneous	736.30
	LRP Coordination	411.09
	Landscaping Antenna	275.72
		\$ 3,931.68
Unexpended balance returned to general fund		\$28,401.00

EMT Coordinator

Appropriated	\$4,800.00
Expended	\$4,800.00

WHEAT

Appropriated	\$3,000.00
Expended	\$1,500.00
Unexpended balance returned to general fund	\$1,500.00

Jodi Ross, Town Administrator

Linda Day, Town Secretary

