

TOWN OF WILLIAMSBURG



Please be sure to attend on June 2nd at 7:00 p.m. at the Anne T. Dunphy School.

THE 2008 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING IS FAST APPROACHING!

While the budget for the next fiscal year is the main focus of the annual town meeting, this year we have several other important articles to discuss. Among them are:

Age-Restricted Housing Community zoning by-law amendment that would allow a variety of housing choices for residents who are 55 years of age and older. The by-law seeks to provide homes affordable to residents who wish to remain in Town. The community setting reduces the residents' building and yard maintenance burdens and minimizes demands on municipal services. While the proposed by-law would allow for building at a higher density than would normally be allowed, it also allows greater flexibility in site planning to promote both affordable housing and the preservation of open space and historic resources within the development. Development will be by special permit through the Zoning Board of Appeals. A public

hearing on this by-law is scheduled for May 19th at 7 p.m. in the Town Offices.

A Right-To-Farm by-law to promote and protect agriculture in Williamsburg. The proposed by-law is described more fully in the article by the Agriculture Commission on page 8 of this newsletter.

An article authorizing the Board of Selectmen to appoint a **permitting officer for the new state law on unattended trenches**. In the wake of the death of a young child, the legislature passed a law requiring anyone digging a trench on public or private land to get a permit from the municipality and to take certain precautions to protect the public when the trench is left unattended.

A weatherization line item for \$6,500 for improvements to town buildings that will help the Town reduce energy usage and expenses. The Town is in line for a free energy audit from the state and this line item will

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Copies of the proposed by-laws are available at the Town Offices, Meekins Library and by e-mailing townadmin@burgy.org

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

2008 has brought many changes, we hope for the good. The fact that the Town's first newsletter in some time is being published is certainly a good sign. Earlier this year, all of the Town's board and departments met together in an "all board's meeting" which enabled information and updates to be shared with everyone; another good sign.

The Town's first Town Administrator, Steve Herzberg, began his tenure and hit the ground running. Certainly, the fact that Steve has begun his work is part of why this increased communication is happen-

ing. The Board of Selectmen believes that having a Town Administrator will help make establishing – and achieving – both short-term and long-term goals a little easier. He should get answers to residents' questions and solutions to departments' problems more efficiently. A more consistent and professional manner of handling such issues *should* become evident. Communications, listening and speaking, will strengthen. Hopefully a sense of "we are all in this together" and "we can disagree without being disagreeable" will be seen throughout Town and many have already remarked on this occurring now. *(Continued on page 2)*

Board of Selectmen *(continued from page 1)*

All of this will in turn, free the Administrative Assistant, Eleanor Warnock, to handle the day to day operations of the office, updating records, establishing more efficient files, and just plain old keeping the place running.

We think you will find the upcoming Town Meeting an interesting one. Due to some luck of the numbers and hard work primarily by the finance committee, the budget submitted should be balanced without depending on over-rides. Even with basically level funded education accounts, the budget was difficult to balance due to limited revenues and large increases of health care, pensions, electricity, fuel and heating oil.

Additionally, after years of work, and taking into account Williamsburg's lay out, the planning board will bring forward an Age-Restricted Housing Community bylaw to help produce housing for our older neighbors while controlling their density in keeping with our community's

character. This is occurring in almost every other town and as noted, has been in the works here for almost three years. Complex in its nature, it is certainly needed and will be brought forth at Town Meeting.

Looking forward, there is a need to look at almost every department, to look at the Town's infrastructure; not only roads and bridges but also its buildings. These assets have been underfunded and therefore not maintained for years and it is the Board's feeling that they cannot be neglected any longer.

There is a real and urgent need for more volunteers. That could mean you! Many boards and Commissions have openings now that need filling. (See list on next page) Please contact the Selectmen's office for more information and please give serious consideration to serving. For those serving now, thank you for your generous service and please keep on doing what you're doing.

The Board looks forward to working with everyone in town and welcomes your feedback on this newsletter.

Short Takes The next All Boards Meeting is June 10th.

To report dangerous road conditions during a storm or at other times when the highway superintendent may not be able to pick up messages, call Northampton Control Dispatch at 586-1508

A Technology Committee has been established to improve the town's web-site and expand our use of cable TV Channel 15.

If you would like to get future issues of this newsletter electronically, send your e-mail address to the town administrator at townadmin@burgy.org.

ANGEL PARK COMMITTEE

The Williamsburg Angel Park "Quiet Reflections Garden" is shaping up nicely. Many thanks to everyone who has made this a reality, particularly Nick Dines, Professor Emeritus Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at UMass- Amherst who designed and helped construct the Garden. The Garden is a public park that aims to provide visitors and residents with a place of reflection, and is a great setting for a wedding or such. Please come visit often.

The Park is located in the Williamsburg Village Center behind the Grange and the Historical Society Building on land next to the Anne T. Dunphy School and the Veterans' Memorial.



We are planning for a May 2008 dedication after more plantings and the engraved bricks are placed. There is plenty of room for more engraved bricks; order forms are available at the town office or by calling 268-7794.

In order to help keep all the town parks and gardens "clean, blooming and green" volunteers are collecting returnable cans and bottles in the refurbished shed attached to the large building at the Transfer Station. Since January 2008 over \$600 has been placed into the bank account for ongoing care. Please help by bringing your cans and bottles.

Town Meeting *(continued from page 1)*

help implement some of their recommendations.

A \$2,500 line item to look at better ways to **use existing space in town building** and begin the process of determining future town building and space needs. This is particularly timely given the potential impact if the public school renovation and consolidation efforts move forward and one of the local school buildings becomes available for other uses.

Several **capital items** including:

- A **new truck** for the highway department to replace an existing six-wheel truck that has reached the end of its useful life. (\$180,000)
- An **addition to the highway garage** to provide sufficient space to store all the existing equipment indoors and provide space to maintain the equipment. (\$250,000)
- \$12,366 to clean, paint and install a **wrought-iron fence** at the Meekins Library along the West Branch of the Mill River; the fence itself was purchased through the efforts of the Friends of the Libraries. More information can be found in the Library's article on page 6 of this newsletter.

Appointed Boards and Committees with Vacancies

Americans with Disabilities Act Committee
Capital Planning
Field Driver
Emergency Management Director
Hampshire County Regional Housing Authority
Hilltown Community Development Corporation
Shade Tree Committee
Technology Committee
Woodland Trails

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

The first 5 people to correctly identify where this picture was taken will win a free subscription to this Newsletter!



CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Capital Planning Committee has been gathering requests for capital purchases (anything greater than \$10,000 and with a life expectancy of 5 years or longer) from Town departments for the upcoming annual town meeting.

We met with Bill Turner at the Highway Department in February along with Jeff Ciuffreda and Steve Herzberg. Bill showed us the plans for the addition to the town garage (\$250,000), Truck #6 and plow (\$180,000) and the roller (\$11,400) that are due for replacement, as well as the various pieces of equipment the town owns.

John Cotton at the Police Department, showed us the new cruiser. John has submitted a request for a safety complex that will be considered for future borrowing.

The School Department has submitted requests for up-

grades to the Anne T. Dunphy building (potentially \$3,886,000) and a site upgrade to the Helen E. James building (\$390,361) to correct drainage problems.

The Library wants to install a fence along the Mill River for safety considerations and has, through the Friends, purchased a wrought iron fence. The cost to the Town to refurbish and install the fence is approximately \$13,000 .

The Capital Planning Committee has an open position that we would like to fill. If you have comments or suggestions please feel free to forward them to me or through the town administrator.

William Sayre, Chair
413/268-7485; sayre@crocker.com

TOWN COLLECTOR

It has been a year since Tess Barstow retired as Town Collector and I began settling in as the new Collector. My office hours are Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., with brief absences during the day for banking and postal errands. Local cable channel 15 carries changes to regular office hours or you can call ahead to check.

The town fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th with fiscal 2009 starting this July. Real estate and personal property tax bills are mailed in late June and late December and have coupons for two tax payments in each billing to accommodate our quarterly billing system and at the same time help keep down expenses. Tax payments are due August 1st, November 1st, February 1st and May 1st. Payments are accepted at the town offices by cash or check, and are also payable by mail or online.

The Motor Vehicle Excise tax bills are generated by the Registry of Motor Vehicles – NOT by the Town of Williamsburg – and are sent in several different batches throughout the year. If on January 1st, you owned a vehicle and either your mailing address and/or place of garaging indicated Williamsburg, you will be directed to make your payment to the Town of Williamsburg. Any errors need to be corrected with the RMV to eliminate the repetition of the errors. On the reverse side of the bill there are directions to apply for an abatement and abatement applications should be directed to the Board of Assessors, P O Box 447, Haydenville. To avoid late fees and/or collection by the Deputy Collector, bills should be

paid in a timely manner even if there are RMV errors or abatement requests. If you receive a bill and no longer own the vehicle, PLEASE do not just ignore the bill. It does not go away!! You must deal with it and change whatever is necessary. Keep note that once the bill is issued, you must either pay it or have it abated by the Assessors. If you have abatement questions, the Assessors can be reached at 268-8403.

Water and sewer meters are read in the spring and fall and bills are sent after each reading for that time period. Beginning with the May 2008 billing, the rates are increasing for the first time in approximately eight years for sewer and twelve years for water. These increases are necessary due to increased fixed costs and the increased fees paid to the City of Northampton for waste disposal.

Over the last five years there have been many software changes in the Collector's office. Some have been more successful than others but I am happy to report that we have used the new water/sewer software for almost a year now and it is working much more efficiently for record keeping than the old systems. We are in the process of condensing tax software information from several different systems down to one that has been in use since late 2005. Once this is complete, hopefully by the end of the year, it will put all of the information in just two areas and will save time and increase efficiency of record keeping.

Bonnie Roberge, Town Collector

268-8401

Brassworks
Penny Postcard



FOOTHILLS HEALTH DISTRICT

Here in Williamsburg, the day-to-day operation of the “Health Department” is in my hands, as the shared Health Agent of the Foothills Health District. This shared arrangement has been successfully in place for over 20 years, with Ashfield, Goshen, and Whately sharing the costs of my full time services to all four towns. I am in my 4th year as your Health Agent in town.

You may see me traveling out and about at any time of the day or evening, inspecting new septic systems, approving the location for your new well, assisting the town in biological emergency plan-

ning exercises, responding to substandard housing complaints, inspecting the food establishment you frequent, or following up a concern about an infectious disease. It is a rich and varied position, and I am pleased to call Williamsburg my home base.

You may call me at 268-8404, or mail to me at PO Box 447, Haydenville. I welcome all calls on any subject matter. In person meetings are always by appointment.

Jackie Duda

COUNCIL ON AGING

The Williamsburg Council On Aging provides a variety of services and activities. In addition to its regular schedule of activities in the Town Offices, the COA will be helping to organize a picnic at Nash Hill Place in July as well as a picnic in back of the Williamsburg Town Offices in September. The Council will also sponsor presentations on

stroke prevention at the Williamsburg Town Offices on June 19th and at Nash Hill Place on June 20th.

For information about these and other events or services call Fran at 268-8407 or e-mail coa@burgy.org.

REP. STEPHEN KULIK

Spring is always a busy time as town meetings and elections are held and local budgets are finalized. It is also a busy time at the State House, as the state budget is debated and there is a push to finish up important legislation before the end of formal legislative sessions.

The House of Representatives completed its budget debate on Friday, May 2. Despite the fact that we are in tough fiscal times, it is a balanced and responsible budget that is particularly good for local aid to municipalities. Due to the slowdown in the economy, the state faces an expected revenue shortfall of about \$1 billion. We have closed this gap with a combination of budget cuts, increased tobacco taxes, and use of the state’s reserve fund. Fortunately, we have been able to use the reserve fund to make up for the difference so that towns are not losing this important source of discretionary local aid. For education aid, we have maintained our 5-year commitment to increasing Chapter 70 aid to schools and increased the total by \$223 million. These two increases in local aid

were contained in an “early resolution” that was adopted by both the House and Senate in March.

What this did was take up the major local aid accounts ahead of the rest of the budget, so that the Cherry Sheets could be sent out early to inform towns and school districts how much state aid would be coming for FY09. This has allowed a timely completion of local budgets, and removed much of the uncertainty in town and school budgeting. I think it is one of the best things that the legislature can do for communities (along with increased money), and I am pleased that we could do this even in a tough budget year for the state.

The final House budget also increased funds for Regional School Transportation, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for state-owned land, and special education transportation. I continue to work on issues of equity in the distribution of education funding, and we are anticipating the release

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Grange Hall, Town Hall, and Church
Williamsburg, MA '89



WILLIAMSBURG LIBRARIES

Library Board begins first Annual Fund

The Williamsburg Library is busier than ever. State data show that Williamsburg is the 4th busiest library per capita in the state: 75% of Williamsburg residents hold library cards from Williamsburg or other area libraries. Since 2001, the total number of library items circulated by the Williamsburg Libraries has increased **over 73%**, the number of interlibrary loan items has increased **over 995%**! These increases, along with requirements for new types of services and support, have led to an increased workload that has created significant challenges in order for our staff to maintain library services. We are conducting an annual appeal to raise funds that will allow us to provide library service on Wednesday evenings and Saturdays until 3 p.m., update the non-fiction collection, continue new wireless computer access at the Haydenville Library, and provide new materials for children and young adults. Also, additional staff hours will be added by supplementing the annual appropriation with raised funds. The Library Board's goal for the first annual fund is to raise \$10,000. Since December the Board has reached out to friends in the community and is now half-way to the \$10,000 goal. Watch for a letter in the mail, read the letter on-line at www.meekinslibrary.org, or pick up a copy at the Haydenville or the Meekins Library.

Haydenville Library is newest town Hotspot!

Over the past few months volunteers and Library staff have been busy sprucing up the Haydenville Library. The Library now offers wireless internet connectivity and a computer. Watch for a change in hours over the summer. Maureen Mathers, our volunteer coordinator at Haydenville, continues to look for volunteers to help staff the library. Volunteer shifts are generally once a month for 2 hours. This is a fun way to meet your neighbors and we provide training. You can call Maureen or Lisa Wenner at the Meekins to talk about volunteering.

Meekins Fence Project

The Board of Library Trustees is working with the Select Board, the Capital Planning Committee and the Friends of the Williamsburg Libraries to bring an article to Town Meeting in June that will help fund the fence along the West Branch of the Mill River. The Friends of the Libraries were able to purchase an iron fence that will work in harmony with the historic library site. The fence must be sandblasted and painted before it can be installed; town meeting will be asked to vote funds for this portion of the project. Once completed, the fence will be donated to the town. Another substantial donation to the project will come from Nick Dines and Gary Warner who have volunteered to work on the riverbank site to prepare for the safe installation of the fence. When installed the fence will allow for greater use of the Meekins lawn along the river and provide needed outdoor community space in the center of Williamsburg. Thanks are owed to The Friends of the Library, Nick Dines, Gary Warner, George Mathers, Bill Turner, and Dave Mathers for their help with and interest in the project.

A Busy Active Library

On Saturday April 26th the Williamsburg Shade Tree Committee and the Friends of the Williamsburg Libraries celebrated Arbor Day, Earth Day and National Poetry month all in one big day with an ongoing poetry reading from 10-2 at the Meekins Library. The Friends sold "Beans for Books" Deans Beans Fair Trade, Organic Coffee as well as displaying information about recycling.

Coming up at the Meekins:

Gregory Maichack returns to the Meekins Library on May 22nd teaching the "New Art of Pastel II; The DaVinci Mode" from 6-8, call to register. Watch for the annual Summer Reading Program to start in late June. "Wild Reads at your Library" for children under eleven and "Expect the Unexpected!" for pre-teens and teens. On June 1st at 3 p.m. a memorial service will be held at the Meekins for Helen Bacon, a long-time resident who was also a great friend of the Library.

Rep. Kulik *(continued from page 5)*

later this spring of Governor Patrick's Readiness Project, which will contain recommendations for reform of education standards, policy, governance, and funding. I look forward to this as the next step of education reform, and I am hopeful that it will present the legislature with an opportunity to address many of the challenges that are unique to operating small and regional schools in rural communities. As always, I will welcome input from people in Williamsburg who have been good advocates on educational issues through the years.

There is also a lot happening at the local level. I recently had the opportunity to walk through the center of Williamsburg with the town's Selectboard, Highway Department, Administrator, and representatives of the Massachusetts Highway Department to discuss improvements that can be made for the safety of pedestrians and vehicles in this increasingly busy part of town. We will be looking at a possible traffic signal near the Post Office and Library, and I am working to obtain funds for a study and design of these improvements in the upcoming Transportation Bond. The legislature has already passed the first part of this Bond bill, which provided Williamsburg with \$143,823 of Chapter 90 money. Also on the transportation front, I am working with town and state officials to expedite the replacement of the Skinnerville Bridge, which is of great concern for both safety and convenience. I am also busy working on the Broadband legislation that will bring high-speed telecommunications services to communities that have either no service or only service in limited areas. The latter is true in Williamsburg, and I am optimistic that improved coverage will be coming in the next couple of years.

In closing, let me say that it continues to be both a privilege and a pleasure to serve Williamsburg as your state representative. I appreciate the input that I receive from citizens and town officials on a wide variety of subjects, and I appreciate the opportunity to keep in touch through this revived Town Newsletter. I encourage people to contact me whenever I can be of assistance. Last fall, Paul Dunphy of Haydenville joined my staff in my district office in South Deerfield. He and I can be reached there at 413-665-7200, or you can email me at rep.stephenkulik@hou.state.ma.us

SEN. BENJAMIN B. DOWNING

Serving the 48 communities that comprise my Berkshire, Hampshire & Franklin Senate District - the largest, most rural of all the Massachusetts Senate districts - presents certain communication challenges not faced by my colleagues in urban areas. I have recently launched two initiatives to address these challenges and to further my goal of being fully accessible to every constituent.

Coffee & Conversation: In February, I kicked-off a new program of roving office hours called Coffee & Conversation. These monthly meetings take place in rotating communities across Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin Counties and provide constituents with an additional platform to discuss important issues affecting them. To date, I have held Coffee & Conversation in Dalton, Hawley and Cummington. Those who attended were able to bring to me their concerns regarding health care reform, education, regional transportation and renewable energy resources. The next Coffee & Conversation will be held on May 23rd at Sheffield Town Hall (21 Depot Street) from 2:30 - 4:00pm. Join me for a coffee and unscripted conversation; all are welcome.

Press Pass: Every Friday, I release an electronic newsletter called the Press Pass, to those throughout the Berkshire, Hampshire & Franklin Senate District who are interested in a recap of the week's news from Beacon Hill. These weekly updates highlight important local happenings, State House events, and provide targeted updates on my legislative, budget and policy agenda, as well as other important news about the Massachusetts Senate.

As always my district office, located at 20 Bank Row in Pittsfield is open Monday through Friday during regular business hours. Please feel free to stop by or call (413) 442-4008 if I can be of assistance.

My online office is frequently updated to reflect upcoming events, including upcoming Coffee & Conversations. To view this information, visit www.bendowning.org and click on "Upcoming Events." To start receiving my Press Pass, click on "Sign Up for Email Updates."



TOWN OF WILLIAMSBURG

Town Offices
141 Main Street
P.O. Box 447
Haydenville, MA 01039

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 7
Haydenville, MA 01039

Selectmen 268-8400
selectmen@burgy.org

Town Administrator 268-8418
townadmin@burgy.org
Fax 268-8409

Highway Dept 268-8405
Police Dept 268-7237
Fire Dept 268-7233

Resident/Boxholder
Haydenville, MA
01039

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

The Williamsburg Agricultural Commission will be presenting a Right-To-Farm By-law for approval to the Williamsburg Town Meeting in June, 2008.

The purposes of this By-law are to promote agriculture, educate residents about agriculture and to encourage its acceptance in our community. Agriculture is a vital part of Williamsburg, past and present. The Town of Williamsburg is committed to do what it can to ensure the continuation of agricultural activities in our community, despite our rapid residential development. Agriculture is important to our town for the local production of food and forest products, as a source of local employment, and for environmental values that agricultural land provides, such as clean air, scenic beauty and open space. In order to accomplish the above-stated purposes, this By-law : 1) affirms the

right to farm in Williamsburg, 2) provides a definition of agriculture, 3) provides a disclosure notice to educate potential buyers of property in Williamsburg about our commitment to agriculture and 4) establishes a procedure for mediation of disputes involving agricultural practices.

Please come to town meeting on June 2nd to discuss and vote on this proposed By-law .

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE IS SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY, MAY 25TH AT NOON AT THE WILLIAMSBURG FIRE STATION WITH AN OBSERVANCE TO FOLLOW AT THE VETERANS MEMORIAL