



# TOWN OF PRINCETON

## Office of the Selectboard

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January 25, 2019

### **Progress Report from the Selectboard**

Dear Princeton Residents,

This month we would like to bring you up to date on many of the projects in town. We can't capture everything that has happened but these are some of the most visible/notable.

### **Council on Aging**

There has been a lot going on with the Council on Aging. We hired Aimee Kindorf to be the new COA Director and added four new Council members: Wendy Pape (president), Mike Warren (vice-president), Barbara Guthrie (secretary), and Susan Stolberg. They will be joining members Jane Fife, Beverly Kholstrom, and Terry Thompson, as well as advisory member Bill Andrysick who have tirelessly served our seniors for many years. Aimee and the Board have been working on current and future programming while Aimee has been working with Town Administrator Nina Nazarian, past Director Linda Farineau, and residents Jim O'Coin and Dave Cruise on the plan and lease for the Sonoma space which will be our new senior center. As of January 14<sup>th</sup> the lease was signed.

The new facility includes two large activity rooms, a small activity room, a casual gathering space with chairs and a coffee pot, an office for the Director, a functional kitchen, and bathrooms that are conveniently located within the space. It has taken longer than expected to arrive at mutually agreeable space plans and lease terms but all parties are looking forward to the renovations beginning. Renovation costs came in higher than either party expected because of the extent of plumbing and electrical work needed, high subcontractor costs and more expensive finishes than originally projected. In the end, we will have a flexible, comfortable, and welcoming space that will meet the Town's needs for as long as necessary.

### **Charter Spectrum**

High speed internet (fiber to the home) is now available to all residents in town and we hope that businesses follow soon. Nina, Kathy Stanley and Ginger Toll worked very hard to ensure that accurate information on residences was given to Charter and that information made available by Charter on pricing, schedules and roll-out was given to residents. This is the culmination of years of work by many people in town and is a great example of the critical role played by volunteers in our town.

### **Advisory Committee**

Three new members were added to the Advisory Committee this year. Mary Jo Wojtusik, Krista Penning, and Helga Lyons took the places of John Shipman, Don Shoeny, and Jim O'Coin. Our thanks to John,

Don, and Jim for their years of service. This year, the Committee, under the leadership of Chair Wayne Adams, will be involved earlier in the budget process. The Advisory Committee and Selectboard met in the fall and decided that the initial approach to budgeting would be level-funding instead of level-service like the past few years. Departments that cannot live within the level-funding will need to justify their request for additional funds. Departments will present their initial budgets to the Advisory Committee and Town Administrator. At a later point in the process, the Selectboard will review recommendations and make the final proposals to Town Meeting in May.

### **Grants**

The Road Advisory Committee, Highway Superintendent Glenn Lyons, the IT Strategic Planning Committee, IT Coordinator Peter Cummings, Nina, and the present and former Selectboards all played a role this year in advocating for and securing grants. The Road Advisory Committee grants were covered in our December letter. The other grants of note are \$45,000 for an integrated financial software package, \$50,000 for the Bagg Hall and Annex stabilization projects, and \$100,000 for reimbursement on the town's make-ready project. Many people advocated for the inclusion of \$9 million for a new public safety center in the State bond bill. They continue to work for the potential release of those funds to Princeton by the Governor.

### **New Public Safety Building**

The Facilities Steering Committee Phase 2 was formed and has been working hard to understand and reduce the cost of a new public safety building. Richard Chase, Chair, Noelani Chase, Rick McCowan, Dennis Moore, and Larry Todd, Secretary, with Fire Chief John Bennet as an advisory member, have been putting out regular Q&A documents to help inform residents on various aspects of the project. Their goal is to come to Town Meeting in the spring with new conceptual plans for a less expensive facility and ask voters to fund design and construction documents. The Committee and the Selectboard hope that by being "shovel ready", we will be more likely to receive money from the State bond bill.

### **Sale of Mechanics Hall**

Based on Town Meeting authorization to sell Mechanics, the Selectboard formed the Mechanics Hall committee, comprised of Larry Pistrang, Chair, Karen Rossow, Secretary, and Jen Shenk, to propose possible deed restrictions to the Selectboard and to determine the process the Town needs to follow for the sale. The Committee will present their recommendations to the Selectboard at the beginning of February, at which time the Selectboard will determine which, if any, restrictions to place on the sale of the building and, then, begin the sale process.

### **Sale of Town-Owned Land**

Progress is being made on selling Town-owned land. A group consisting of town officials from the Assessor's and Treasurer/Collector's Offices, Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Planning/Zoning, and the Board of Health have been working to identify which parcels might have value on the open market, which might only have value to an abutter, and which might have value to the State. The group has received quotes on percolation (perc) tests, surveys, and appraisals and the Selectboard has authorized spending for those purposes. Kathy Stanley, our Principal Assessor, is leading the effort and will be conferring with Town Counsel on the legal processes to follow.

### **Properties Delinquent in their Taxes**

Tax Collector Jim Dunbar has been working on placing tax liens on all properties in town that are behind in their taxes. A tax lien is the first step required for the town to begin the foreclosure process on a

property. Taxpayers will have time to pay what they owe and avoid foreclosure. It is important to note that the Town earns a minimum of 14% interest per year on unpaid taxes.

### **Communications**

One of the Selectboard's goals this year is to increase communication with residents. This has been a two-pronged effort. We have begun monthly letters, such as this one, on topics that we feel might be of interest to residents. We have also participated in two evening Town Buzz sessions to provide residents the opportunity to speak with the Selectboard on topics of their choice. These sessions will be held regularly.

### **Student on Selectboard**

This year we added a student to our Board as a deliberating but non-voting member. This was done to encourage young people to become involved in town government. We interviewed four strong candidates and selected Kimberly Union, a junior at Wachusett, to join the Board. Kim has been participating in our evening meetings and has added a welcome, more youthful and perhaps more practical, perspective to many of our discussions.

### **Building Stabilization Projects**

Town Meeting authorized us to proceed on stabilizing the current Public Safety Complex, the Annex, and Bagg Hall. The first two were prioritized since the Annex will be needed as office space by Town Hall employees while the Bagg Hall work is being done. An architectural firm has been engaged to do the design work on the Public Safety Complex and the Annex. Construction documents are projected to be put out for bid in April of 2019, with work beginning in the summer of 2019. The process of selecting a firm to do the design work for the Bagg Hall stabilization has also begun. Much thanks to Chris Conway, Steve Mirick, and Jim O'Coin for their ongoing assistance with these efforts.

### **Road Projects**

There are several large road projects in the works. The southern section of Calamint Hill Rd North will be rebuilt and paved starting this spring. The northern section will be done after July 1 but before winter. The 140 East Princeton Village project will begin as early as this winter and will probably take 2-3 years. This will start at the Sterling/Princeton line south of Leominster Rd and will go up to around Captain Bob's. It will include replacement of a bridge, a new roundabout and other traffic calming measures, and new sidewalks, lights and other beautification measures for the Village. Glen Lyons and the Road Advisory Committee (Bill Holder, Chair, Joe Bellucci, Larry Greene, Terry Thompson, and Kevin Toohey) have put tremendous effort into these projects and should be commended for their dedication.

### **Cemetery**

William (Bill) Bergstrom was appointed to be our new Cemetery Superintendent. Bill brings extensive experience with almost all levels of a funeral director's duties, as well as skills in turf management and landscaping.

### **Fire Engines**

The Fire Department recently took delivery of a new fire engine and is waiting for the delivery of a used engine later this winter. These engines will increase the Town's water-on-wheels capacity to approximately 4,000 gallons at each station. Engine 2, which had been a problematic piece of equipment, was sold. Much thanks to Chief Bennett for working so tirelessly to find us a good deal on these engines.

### EMT Training for Police

The Town has received a Community Compact Grant that will fund EMT training for some of our police officers. Given that our police officers are often the first on the scene of a medical emergency, it helps all of us to have them become EMT certified.

Sincerely,

The Princeton Selectboard



Richard C. Bisk, Chair



Edith M. Morgan, Clerk



Karen G. Cruise, Member