

Report of the Board of Selectmen

This year will be remembered, by both the Town and the Board, as a time of challenge and change. We entered the year facing the daunting task of cleaning up after the Ice Storm of December 2008. It was unclear as we began what level of assistance we would be receiving from either the state or the Federal government but it was clear to all of us that the cost was going to be in the millions. Estimates put the cost of clean-up at close to \$5,000,000. It was obvious to all that clean-up had to proceed quickly to make the roads safe and able to be plowed for the remainder of the winter. In the meantime, we were authorized by the State and Town Meeting to borrow up to \$5 millions dollars over a two year period in advance of partial reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. In order to receive reimbursement, work needed to be carefully allocated to meet regulations and proper documentation be kept at every point in the process. Initially the requirements appeared overwhelming. Dennis Rindone and Jon Fitch worked diligently and carefully to make sure all requirements were being met.

Work began on the budget early in the year with the expectation that it would be a difficult year ahead as a result of the worsening economy. This expectation was affirmed when the Governor announced he was requesting 9C authority from the Legislature, which he received and then made mid-year cuts in local aid to cities and towns. These cuts were to continue into the FY10 budget year.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, March 1st, Dennis Rindone passed away in his sleep of a heart attack. Dennis, 63, had served as our Town Administrator for ten years. His death was totally unexpected and a complete shock to his family, town employees and volunteers and everyone who knew him and to whom he had meant so much. Dennis was well known state-wide for his work in local government, his lobbying efforts on behalf of small towns and for creating a pictorial record of all state monuments to veterans of war.

A search began immediately to find a temporary replacement to assist with operation of town affairs and preparation of the budget and warrant for Annual Town Meeting in May. Working through the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Collins Center at UMass Boston, Jill Myers was quickly identified. Jill had previously served as town administrator for the towns of Uxbridge and Charlton and was a finalist in a number for communities for the same position. The selectmen approved a contract for her service through the Collins Center and Jill began working in Princeton on a temporary, part-time basis within the week. Her assistance to the Town Hall and the Board of Selectmen was invaluable and greatly appreciated. She brought us the skills and experience to make it through this very difficult and challenging time. Jill was able to get us through our annual town meeting in May before beginning her new position as Town Administrator for the town of Kingston.

The selectmen decided to continue to work with the Collins Center in the recruitment of our new administrator. Dick Kobayashi of the Collins Center served as the principal consultant on this effort. He met extensively with the selectmen, town employees and

members of the community to develop a profile of the community and our detailed expectations for a new town administrator.

During the months of May and early June, applications were reviewed and interviews of finalists were conducted in public session by the Board of Selectmen. An executive session with our chosen candidate was held on June 22nd. The Board of Selectmen entered into a three year contract with John Lebeaux of Shrewsbury to serve as Town Administrator for the Town of Princeton on June 29, 2009. John was introduced to department heads and staff on that day. John began on July 1, 2009, the goal originally set by the board. John brings to us his years of experience as a small business owner and selectman for the town of Shrewsbury.

In mid-July, Charlie Schmohl, Chief of Police, submitted his resignation to the Board of Selectmen effective September 13, 2009. Charlie had planned to retire in June of 2010 but changes occurring at the state level encouraged him to move that date forward. Charlie had been with the Princeton Police Department for 40 years. In September, Lt. Michelle Powers was named Interim Chief of Police and Officer Michael Trafecante was named Provisional Sergeant. The transition has gone smoothly. The interim positions are through June 2010.

Work continued on aspects of the ice storm clean up as well as submission of the paperwork for reimbursement. FEMA will reimburse 75% of the costs, while the State Legislation appropriated approximately 12.5%. A total of \$4,000,000 was borrowed by the Town and PMLD. As of the end of the year, the total still owed by the Town is only \$200,000.

Two major projects that were important to Dennis Rindone were completed before his passing. The first was the redesign of the Town Seal and the second was the investiture of a new Town Flag in the Great Hall of Flags at the State House in Boston on January 29, 2009. Both projects were completed through generous town volunteer efforts with input from the students at the Thomas Prince School.

One of Dennis and the Board's major projects came to a close and was not successful. The Board, together with the Board of Health, worked for almost two years on a regional household trash collection program with Hubbardston and Templeton. A program with Waste Management was finalized and offered to residents. A lack of the minimum necessary participation doomed the project. Additional, numerous local issues and projects were addressed by the Board including approval of a long term lease for the "town hayfields" at Four Corners.

Lastly, this was Princeton's 250th anniversary of incorporation. Special thanks go out from the Board to the committee that planned and managed the numerous activities and events throughout the year that brought a little joyful celebration to what might otherwise have been Princeton's "annus horribilis".

Respectfully submitted,

The Board of Selectmen

BRACKETT & LUCAS

COUNSELORS AT LAW

GARY S. BRACKETT
JUDITH A. PICKETT
ELLEN CALLAHAN DOUCETTE
HEATHER W. KINGSBURY
JASON D. GROSSFIELD

19 CEDAR STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01609
508-799-9739
FAX 508-799-9799

OF COUNSEL
ELAINE M. LUCAS

Direct Email
JAPickett@BrackettLucas.com

REPORT OF TOWN COUNSEL

As Town Counsel, we submit our report regarding requested legal opinions and litigation brought by and against the Town of Princeton during the calendar year 2009 as well as the status of litigation matters begun in earlier years which are still pending.

I. LITIGATION

- A. Jeffrey A. Goodhue v. Town of Princeton, Massachusetts, Zoning Board of the Town of Princeton, John Puricelli, Chairman and Members Walter Kuklinski and Henry Beth
Worcester Housing Court 08CV323

This office represents the Town of Princeton, the Zoning Board of Appeals ("Board") and its members in this matter. It involves an appeal by Jeffrey A. Goodhue from a decision of the Board upholding a Cease and Desist Order regarding storage of commercial vehicles and associated equipment on residential property. Since filing the Complaint in April of 2008, the plaintiff has not filed any motions or other papers in furtherance of the appeal.

- B. Leo J. Montagna v. Town of Princeton
Leominster District Court 0861CV832

This is an appeal by Leo Montagna from a decision of the Princeton Board of Selectmen ("Board") ordering Montagna's dog, Sunny, to be euthanized. The order was issued after a hearing held at the request of a Princeton resident who alleged that Sunny had attacked him. A clerk-magistrate of the District Court reversed the order of the Board. The clerk-magistrate further instructed the parties that the Board may either conduct a hearing and issue a modified order on remand or pursue an appeal to a judge of the District Court. The Board issued a modified order in March 2009 ordering, in part, that the dog be kept in a fenced enclosure or on leash when outdoors and that he complete one year of obedience training.

II. REQUESTS FOR LEGAL OPINIONS

At the request of the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator, we opened 9 new Town of Princeton files during calendar year 2009. Of the opened files, 8 involved either oral or written legal opinions or requests for departmental assistance and 1 was a town meeting file.

Respectfully submitted,
Brackett & Lucas
Town Counsel

REPORT OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

The year 2009 was a very eventful one for Princeton, principally as a result of the devastating ice storm of December 2008. It was likewise both a very eventful and tremendously sad year for the town relative to the position of Town Administrator. Longtime Town Administrator Dennis E. Rindone died unexpectedly on March 1. Dennis began his employment with the Town October 19, 1998. As part of a restructuring plan authorized by the Board of Selectmen June 30, 2000, his position expanded to that of Town Administrator, his position until his death.

As the people of Princeton know first-hand, Dennis served the community with great distinction. His body of work continues to serve the Town every single day, and will be part of his legacy for years to come.

Accordingly, the Town employed three individuals as Town Administrator in 2009. Dennis spent a tremendous amount of January and February dealing with the monumental task of establishing just how Princeton was going to handle the ice storm cleanup process. At the same time, he attended to the necessary daily operations of town government.

On March 10, the Board of Selectmen appointed Jill Myers as Interim Town Administrator. An experienced municipal manager, Jill immediately went to work concentrating on the critical tasks of preparing the budget for Fiscal 2010 and the Warrant for the May Annual Town Meeting. Jill provided the town the quality professional management it needed at that time. She left the interim position April 22 to accept the permanent Town Administrator position in Kingston, Mass.

For the remainder of the fiscal year the Board of Selectmen and various department heads shared those duties that could not be delayed until a permanent administrator was hired.

On July 1, the first day of the new fiscal year, I became Princeton's Town Administrator.

Another major personnel-related event was Police Chief Charles Schmohl's retirement after over forty years of service to the town, more than twenty years of which as Police Chief. Charlie was a true professional who was both highly respected and very well liked by the townspeople, his staff, and town department heads and employees. To earn that high regard from these varied constituencies speaks volumes about how Charlie Schmohl conducted himself. Though it was just for a few months, I consider myself very lucky to have worked with him.

Charlie led a very professional department, so much so that it allowed the Board of Selectmen to make a series of internal promotions to some very qualified employees. It appointed Lieutenant Michele Powers as Interim Police Chief, Officer Michael Trafecante as Provisional Sergeant, promoted Part-Time Officer John Chase to full-time status, and appointed Dispatcher Travis Russell as a Part-Time Police Officer.

Since my first day of work, this office has been very heavily involved with administrative and financial matters relating to the ice storm cleanup. Though Princeton's response to the ice storm has been community-wide since the event, I want particularly to

acknowledge the efforts of PMLD Manager Jon Fitch and Tree Warden Joe Lee for their leadership throughout the process.

In addition to day-to-day town hall operations, this office actively participated in the following major projects or programs in 2009:

- Bentley Property Request for Proposals and Lease Agreement
- Princeton Center Walking Trail upgrade
- Princeton Center roof repair
- Route 140 Safety Improvements Task Force
- Town Plan Implementation
- Ball Hill Bridge replacement
- Examination of Public Safety service delivery methods
- Timely setting of tax rate
- Implementation of Auditor's Management Letter recommendations
- Paying down and refinancing of ice storm borrowing

The effort to regionalize with Hubbardston and Templeton a single hauler trash/recycling collection and disposal service did not receive the necessary public participation. Representatives of the three towns and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection continue to meet to explore options but to date have not found any alternative program to bring forward.

In my review of the Town's fiscal position, I note its existing conservative management philosophy and commitment to building its reserve balances. These practices position Princeton in a much better position to manage itself than many other communities find themselves. The challenges presented by the global economic downturn and the resulting negative effect to both state aid and local receipt revenue sources remain both a concern and a strong indicator to maintain the discipline that has been in place for many years.

I thank the various board, committee, and commission members, department heads and employees for both their assistance to me and their patience with me as I acquaint myself with their activities. Any successes the town achieves are the result of the efforts of the entire organization. I particularly appreciate the Advisory Board's active participation in financial matters.

It is my great honor to have been selected Town Administrator by the Board of Selectmen. Their counsel and direction has been invaluable to me as I discharge my duties.

On a personal note, my wife Debbie and I have been touched by the extremely warm and friendly welcome we have received from the many Princeton residents and employees we have met.

Lastly, I must thank Jill Myers, but especially Dennis Rindone, for allowing me to assume my position in such a very well managed community.

Respectfully submitted,
John Lebeaux

TOWN OF PRINCETON ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2009

