

Report of the Board of Selectmen

Your Board of Selectmen has had an interesting and productive year in 2010. We welcomed Edith Morgan to the Board with her election in May. Alan Sentkowski finished his six years of service as Selectman following several years as Town Clerk. We were lucky to get Alan back to Princeton's service with his appointment to the Advisory Board.

Fiscal constraints continue. Revenues for the Town and State have been down because of the prolonged fiscal crisis in the nation. Though budgeting is difficult due to the unknowns of diminishing revenues Princeton has not suffered too badly. Our employees, like all of us, have felt the restraint that is necessary in these times. Raises, whether cost of living, merit, or union negotiated have all been held to the minimums we all expect in these difficult times. Benefits like health insurance contributions by employees and their coverage have been adjusted to help control these rapidly escalating costs. The expectation is that this type of restraint will be necessary for the time being.

There were changes in the Public Safety departments. First, Michelle Powers was appointed to the position of full time Police Chief. Michelle has served for more than twenty years on the Princeton Police Department as an Officer, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Interim Chief and finally as Police Chief. The Board was pleased to offer Michelle a three year contract. In addition to Michelle's appointment Town Meeting voted funding for a sixth police officer. This has been a need for several years. With the retirement of Charlie Schmohl Princeton no longer enjoyed the 24/7 coverage Charlie provided as a long time Princeton resident. Lastly, because Princeton is lucky to have well trained police personnel we were able to promote Michael Trafecante to the position of Sergeant.

Other changes are stirring for the Public Safety Department. With continuing fiscal constraint it is time to look at all our public safety service in a concerted way. A committee of citizens was appointed in the fall of 2010 with a charge to look at all aspects of the way public safety was dispensed in Princeton. Incentives from the state for regionalizing services are available. The public Safety Committee is exploring the possible regionalization of dispatch, advanced life support ambulance, the need for a full time fire chief and the myriad of topics encompassed by all of the above. They are making progress and are expected to be making some recommendations before the annual town meeting this year.

Princeton's highways continue to be a concern. Our Road Advisory Committee has made great progress, but we live in an area with poor soils and bad drainage. Roads that were first on the list to be repaired at the beginning of the process are now due to be attended to again. Princeton has been very fortunate to receive a significant amount of federal and state assistance. We thank the Road Advisory Committee for their continued efforts in the pursuit of funds from grants and other governmental sources.

The road improvement process was enhanced with the appointment of the Route 140 Task Force. This is a committee comprised of three members and an alternate for each of the towns of Sterling, Westminster and Princeton. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission and Montachusett Regional Planning Commission funded a "Corridor Study" which allowed a detailed analysis of the users, crash data, environmental factors, pavement conditions, structure conditions, historical factors and many other elements along Route 140 from the intersection of Interstate 190 in Sterling, through Princeton and ending at the intersection of Route 140 at Route 2 in Westminster. The report will be available on the Princeton website. This process and the collaboration between the three towns will allow access to federal and state funds for multiple safety improvements along the route.

In the fall of 2010 two issues arose involving Thomas Prince School, one being a looming problem and, the other an opportunity. The problem is declining enrollment which will jeopardize our middle school level education in the coming years. The Select Board appointed a committee to investigate and recommend corrective steps to be taken. Their work should be done by April 2010. This is a serious

problem, but not insurmountable. Princeton, like many small and rural communities is experiencing declining birth rates. This topic will be front and center in coming months.

The opportunity is to fix a leaking roof at Thomas Prince School with the help of the last bit of federal stimulus money. We have been nursing a leaking roof on the older portion of Thomas Prince School for several years. The Green Schools Program, a part of the Federal Stimulus Package, was offered. This process is just starting in early 2011 and includes opportunities to replace older less energy efficient windows and possibly upgrade the boiler. Town meeting action will be required to appropriate funds for these projects which will be reimbursed at a rate of approximately 52%.

Fiscally Princeton is in reasonable shape. By the end of fiscal 2011 much of the Town's debt will be repaid. The bond rating for the town is very healthy. Though the tax rate increased in fiscal 2010 the average tax bill was less for this year than the prior by about \$250.00 per household. The explanation is that though assessed values continue to decline with the current market conditions so has the amount of money necessary to cover expenses and especially debt. Because of the constrained fiscal environment, Princeton has deferred some items which will necessarily need to be addressed in the coming years.

In closing, the Select Board would like to thank all the department heads and employees who provide for the daily needs of Princeton. Turnover in employees is minimal and most department heads have graduated through the ranks of their department. The result is that tasks are handled with efficiency and little fanfare . They have done a good job with limited resources.

We thank all who volunteer and serve on the numerous town committees. Princeton is fortunate to have many volunteers who bring their professional expertise to our committees. Princeton volunteers give our town the flavor and perspective we enjoy and minimize financial demands to the taxpayers for the services they provide.

Respectfully submitted,

Princeton Board of Selectmen

2010

BRACKETT & LUCAS

COUNSELORS AT LAW

19 CEDAR STREET

WORCESTER, MA 01609

508-799-9739

FAX 508-799-9799

JUDITH A. PICKETT

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 2010 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. Town of Princeton, by and through its Building Inspector v. Geoffrey Yaglou
Worcester Housing Court 10CV-1137

This case involves an action for zoning enforcement brought by the Building Inspector seeking injunctive relief ordering the defendant to comply with Orders of the Building Inspector and to cease all zoning violations on his property. The parties entered into an Agreement providing for phased removal of junk and unregistered motor vehicles by May 3, 2011. The Court retained jurisdiction with a case review conference scheduled for May 13, 2011.

II. REQUESTS FOR LEGAL OPINIONS

At the request of the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator, we opened seven new Town of Princeton files during calendar year 2010.

Respectfully submitted,
Brackett & Lucas
Town Counsel

REPORT OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

As I make my second annual report I note the year 2010 was much more typical than the previous year, when the tumultuous consequences of the December 2008 ice storm were a constant influence on the activities of municipal government. The challenges and opportunities that presented in 2010 were significant, but they did not approach the crisis response that the ice storm required.

Princeton resumed going about its normal business in 2010. The principal change in senior personnel was that of Interim Police Chief Michele Powers being appointed as permanent chief. Chief Powers's appointment completed the very smooth transition of leadership following her predecessor's (Chief Charles Schmohl) retirement in 2009. Associated with the transition planning, the annual town meeting authorized funding to allow for a sixth full-time patrol officer position to be created, a staffing improvement that greatly enhances public safety.

There were two very successful road reconstruction projects during the calendar year: Gates Road and a portion of Calamint Hill Road South. Both jobs were much more than a repaving. The roads were re-graded and new drainage systems were installed that will prevent premature deterioration. These projects are part of the ongoing improvement schedule developed by the Road Advisory Committee (RAC) that systematically addresses improvements to town thoroughfares. Both projects were constructed by E.H. Perkins of Wayland under the supervision of Highway Superintendent Glenn Lyons and the RAC.

The Town's fiscal position remains strong as a result of its long tradition of spending carefully and maintaining a strong reserve position. The annual audit recognized these positive qualities and noted that the Town continues to address the auditor's ongoing recommendations to improve all aspects of financial management. As an example the town undertook in 2010 an *Other Post Employment Benefits* analysis to establish future year liabilities associated with retirees' benefits (principally healthcare) in order to prepare for these expenses.

At the direction of the Board of Selectmen I provided staff support in 2010 to two committees it established to investigate two important issues: the Thomas Prince Middle School Enrollment Study Committee was charged to examine the issues and options related to the declining student population anticipated at the school's seventh and eighth grade levels, and the Public Safety Committee was charged to explore public safety service delivery models in order to find what provides the highest level of service the town can reasonably afford. The Board also appointed me as its representative to the regional Green Repair School Building Committee which is evaluating potential repair or replacement to the roof, windows and boilers at the Thomas Prince School along with similar projects at two other Wachusett Regional School District schools.

President Obama declared Worcester County a Federal Disaster Area as a result of flooding that occurred during March, 2010. Though not remotely approaching the magnitude of the December, 2008 ice storm, the town did make necessary emergency responses through actions taken by the Highway Department. Costs associated with these responses qualified for federal reimbursement at a rate of 75% for qualified expenses.

Highway Superintendent Glenn Lyons led these efforts, which resulted in a reimbursement of slightly more than \$24,000.

The heating boiler at the Princeton Center unexpectedly failed in late October. The processes required by Massachusetts public procurement laws took some time and resulted in some downright cold conditions for occupants in the building during November. The project was bid and advertised as required by law, and the contract was awarded to Ace Temperature Control of Worcester as a result of its low bid of \$16,995. The project was successfully completed in early December.

I thank the Princeton Center Management Committee, the building's tenants and their clients for their patience and understanding during a period that was sometimes quite uncomfortable while the procurement and installation processes were ongoing.

In an effort to increase communication between Town Hall and the residents of town, a town hall newsletter, *Bagg Hall News*, was created. The first issue was distributed via hard copies in electric bills. Subsequent editions, sent quarterly through the year were made available exclusively in electronic format by posting them on the town website and by e-mailing them to all subscribers of the "Town News" feature of the website. The newsletter contains calendar announcements, and various news items from town departments and committees. I encourage all parties to regularly consult the website for information.

I offer sincere thanks to the various board, committee, and commission members, department heads and employees for all their assistance to me. 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.

I remain grateful for the continued support of the Board of Selectmen. Their counsel and direction has been invaluable to me as I discharge my duties.

On a personal note, I remain very appreciative of the cordiality I encounter with great regularity as I interact with town employees and residents.

Lastly, I thank the Board of Selectmen and the residents of Princeton for the opportunity to serve as your Town Administrator.

Respectfully submitted,
John Lebeaux

TOWN OF PRINCETON ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2010

VOTERS

