

REPORT OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

I am pleased to submit my third annual report of the Town Administrator for this, the 375th Anniversary of Scituate's founding. The past year continued a number of initiatives commenced by the Town in previous years. Our financial position has greatly improved since last year as a result of stronger financial policies, increased revenues, and the support of the community in approving a \$2.2 million operating override in May.

The Board and Advisory Committee's support of financial policies to build up the Town's reserves has provided the Town with a cushion to weather unexpected events and replenish the Stabilization Fund for costs incurred during the December 26, 2010 storm. In April, the Town issued a bond in the amount of xx. Standard and Poor's confirmed the Town's rating of AA, which was very positive given the economic climate the past few years. The financial team's goal is to obtain a bond rating increase, and we are confident we can achieve this following if we continue to follow the financial guidelines of building up reserves and not use Free Cash to subsidize ongoing operating budget needs.

Our capital program continues to make small steps in the right direction. However, the list of capital items grows ever longer and the Town must make a commitment to addressing these needs that are just as important as operating budget needs. This continues to be a challenge. The override provided ongoing funds to address road maintenance and seawalls (\$400,000) which have been critical areas for the Town in terms of infrastructure improvements. In the same vein, water and sewer repairs continue to be aggressive in order to make up for many years when no substantial work was undertaken. The Musquashicut sewer project is on schedule and will be completed in spring of 2012. Our public buildings continue to suffer from lack of proper maintenance and oversight. This need, coupled with the Town's initiatives in sustainable energy such as the Energy Saving Contract program (ESCO), require an individual outfitted by education and experience to assist town officials in determining what is needed and to insure the Town is getting its return on investment for the improvements already made. The creation of the Facilities Manager position remains a key priority.

In the areas of human resources, the police contract and clerical union contracts were settled covering the period FY 10 to FY 13. Long term contracts provide predictability in the expenses of the Town as salaries make up the majority of costs on the town side. The appointment of the new position of Information Technology Director quickly resulted in cost savings and streamlining of software and hardware acquisitions. It has also insured that our data is safe and has adequate protections.

Much time and effort was devoted this past fall to reorganizing our Veterans Services Department. The Town has joined forces with the Town of Hingham for a veteran's district and this change is designed to insure that our veterans, their spouses and/or dependents receive all benefits to which they are entitled.

The 375th Anniversary Committee provided a wealth of programs and activities during the year and \$10,000 was provided by Community Preservation for a book chronicling these events during the year.

Community Preservation funds also provided \$60,000 to undertake a feasibility study of Gates School. This study will determine the structural soundness of the building as well as recommendations for its continued efficacy as a school or for another purpose, such as a mixed use community center/Town Hall.

The wind turbine will be operation in April of 2012 and this will help offset the Town's electrical costs. In addition, town meeting approved the leasing of the landfill for construction of a solar array that will further assist in defraying the town's electrical costs.

Slow, but steady progress is being made in the operation and management of the town's beaches with funds now provided through a revolving fund that will let us reinvest in the beaches and make some improvements. This past year the south Minot Beach entrance had to be closed as a result of shifting rocks under the ramp and high bacteria counts forced the closing of Sand Hills Beach on multiple occasions. Addressing these two issues and finding adequate solutions will be a priority next spring. Streamlining the purchase of stickers is also a continuing goal.

Overall, the town budget has had only modest operational increases the past two years. Our staff compliment on the town-side is 13.7 full-time equivalents less than in 2008. This means employees are doing more with less despite more mandates and less resources. We have a talented group of capable professionals and support staff that care about the services they provide. My gratitude is extended to them as well as Kim Donovan, Chris Chessia and Sheila Manning, the support staff in the Selectmen/Town Administrator Office who keep things moving and on schedule. Finally, my sincere thanks to the Board of Selectmen, whose support of new initiatives, and acceptance of change in order to move the Town forward has made all the difference.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Vinchesi
Town Administrator