

**The 2010 Annual Town Report will be available the week of April 11. Below is a copy of my report included within it.**

**After months of preparation, deliberation and review, Town Meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 11 starting at 7:00 p.m. at Scituate High School Auditorium. Town Meeting is your opportunity to comment and vote on matters that affect the town not only for the next fiscal year starting July 1, but for several years into the future. The Town's General Bylaws (posted on website) set out the guidelines for the conduct of the meeting.**

**New England Town Meeting is one of the purest remaining forms of democratic governance in the United States. Please attend so we know what you think and what you want us to do for your community.**

### **REPORT OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

2010 continued to see little improvement in the economic downturn which affected everyone for the second straight year. The Fiscal Year 2011 budget was balanced at the April Town Meeting but not without significant cuts to the school department budget and additional reductions on the town side. In the fall, the special town meeting needed to appropriate an additional \$274,000 from Free Cash to cover revenue shortfalls as a result of a mixture of reduced state aid and local receipts as well as an increase in state assessments.

The town's new budgeting process entered its second year and a number of additional enhancements and improvements were added to continue to better refine and project revenues and expenditures. It is available on the town's website for review. Of particular note, a new capital planning budgeting process was implemented for the FY 12 budget process. This new plan evaluates all capital needs on an objective and nationally recognized rating formula based on a number of criteria. These ratings are then applied against recommended funding plans, not only for the immediate future but for a five-year rolling capital plan. The Town's capital plan has suffered greatly as a result of a lack of clearly defined policies to fund big ticket items and the absence of a formal review process to fairly and equitably review competing capital needs in departments. The plan will endeavor to devote a minimum of 2-3% of General Fund revenue annually to fund the capital plan. Planning for the future is not an exercise to be undertaken after the current operating budget is addressed. It must happen concurrently and is just as important. Our capital needs are apparent on our roads, buildings, facilities and infrastructure. A sound financing plan to begin to factor in the myriad of these needs was long overdue.

Contract negotiations still continue with three town unions. In 2010 two contracts were settled: Laborer's (DPW) and AMP (professional staff). These contracts provided for 0% increases in FY 10. In FY 11 and 12 the Laborer's will receive 1% and 2%. In exchange, the Town consolidated snow operations, reduced contracting of outside services, and incentivized staff to obtain more licenses to increase subject expertise and

cross training across all division lines. For AMP, a four year contract was negotiated for 0% in FY 10 and 2% for FY 11-13. The Town negotiated merit-based performance evaluations for all professional staff that will be implemented in FY 11. New health insurance language was also negotiated. These two unions are to be commended for the spirit of cooperation and understanding of the Town's financial position during negotiations. Three other union contracts (police, fire, and TOSCA (clerical) remain unsettled and expired in June of 2009. Fire is in arbitration and police in mediation. The main issue with the police union is payment of the Quinn Bill educational incentive. Originally a 50-50 split with the Commonwealth, this reimbursement was reduced to virtually nothing in FY 10 and will no longer be provided to communities. This would be an additional cost of \$125,000 per year to the Town to provide.

Most residents do not realize that the Town's staff compliment is 16 less full-time equivalents than in FY 2008. We continue to be understaffed, and this is borne out but benchmarking in other communities where departments are on average, smaller than all other towns. This has impacted us in the delivery of services, most notably in the information technology area. Funding was provided at town meeting to create the position of IT Director after an extensive study by a specially appointed Technology Committee. This long overdue addition to town staff will accrue many dividends. A new sergeant was also appointed in the Police Department after a revised and rigorous selection process. Supervisory training funding is needed for all departments, particularly in the case of public safety. This will be a focus for next year's budget.

Other major changes that occurred during the year included a comprehensive analysis of the operations and funding of town beaches. A committee was formed and provided recommendations to the Board of Selectmen that were unanimously adopted that made changes to beach sticker fees, administration, and financing. These improvements will provide additional revenues to support our lifeguards and beaches as well as improve issuance of beach stickers through on-line registration.

A significant achievement in 2010 was the Town's designation as a "Green Community." After many months of work and town meeting approvals the Town is now one of 45 communities that are eligible for grants and other incentives to provided energy efficient and environmentally sound approaches to buildings and infrastructure. Thanks are extended to Town Planner, Laura Harbottle, for the hard work she put into meeting the multitude of requirements to receive this designation. A major goal of the Town is to be less reliant on outside sources for our power needs. The wind turbine contract was finalized and construction will begin in the summer of 2011. Town meeting also approved the construction of a solar array on the Town's capped landfill. When both projects are completed, the Town will be self-supporting for almost 60% of its energy needs.

Much time and effort was also expended in acquiring the former Pier 44 site for municipal purposes. Future use of this waterfront property is now being studied by the Pier 44 Building Options and Feasibility Study Committee and its recommendations are anticipated in late 2011.

In the fall, a Request for Proposal was issued to construct a cell tower at Wampanoag School. This tower will generate a minimum of \$24,000 in annual revenue to the Town for the next 20 years.

The Town's website was overhauled and was redesigned to provide more information, and be more accessible to, residents and visitors. A monthly report is posted by the Town Administrator on town issues and events. In an effort to continue to expand communications to residents, a new cable studio was built at the high school. The studio is available to all town residents for local programming and thanks are extended to the School Department for its support and assistance in bringing this long-awaited project to fruition.

An aggressive marketing campaign was implemented for Widow's Walk golf course in March. Golf has suffered greatly during the downturn in the economy, but our public golf course broke even. A new on-line tee reservation system, coupons, daily specials and expanded media coverage helped expand Widow's place as one of the best public golf courses around. This course is an asset to the community, and unlike many of its counterparts in other towns, is holding its own. The course is in need of some capital improvements, but does not have enough surplus revenue for that to be possible for the short term.

This report would not be complete without some discussion of the coastal storm that ravaged our community on December 26 and 27. A tidal surge resulting in coastal flooding and beach over wash affected a significant amount of our community. Public safety and DPW personnel responded around the clock evacuating over 80 families, setting up shelters, and insuring residents were safe. Two house fires at the height of the storm, complicated by downed wires and lack of response from National Grid added to the challenges as well as the discovery of a significant sea wall breach on Turner Road. After much hard work by our staff seeking reimbursement from MEMA and FEMA, it is likely the Town will need to absorb the costs of mitigating the effects of this storm. However, no loss of life or injuries were sustained. Most important, residents can be more than proud of the professionalism and caliber of the talent your town employees exhibited during this incident, most notably, police, fire, DPW and Building. They responded tirelessly and unselfishly to get the job done. It is said that it is at times like these when residents need us most. We can all have piece of mind and confidence in our employees' abilities to keep our community safe.

As we head into 2011 a number of challenges remain, chief among them our limited revenues and the increasing cost of the provision of town services. However, we are holding steady and through conservative budgeting are making ends meet. That does not mean that services are of the same quality or provided to the same extent as residents have become accustomed to; we are simply treading water. There is still much to do and we will strive to do our best.

My thanks are extended to the members of the Board who remain ever-supportive and are committed to making Scituate the best town to live in Massachusetts. I am also indebted to our professional and support staff who continue to go above and beyond if it is for the good of the Town. Finally, my thanks to Kim Donovan and Sheila Manning, who keep our offices running so efficiently and continue to adapt to a never-ending onslaught of management changes and initiatives.

I look forward to serving the community and meeting more citizens in 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Vinchesi  
Town Administrator