

New VT-Alert Protocol: The Town of Stowe will now be using VT Alerts as the primary communications system for local emergency notifications. Stowe-specific alerts will include notices of storm preparations, traffic alerts, road closures, and other public safety emergencies. You can choose how you want to be notified and there is no cost to the subscriber. The system is not just designed for residents, it is intended to be used by anyone that visits, works or lives in the area. We encourage you to register for alerts at <https://vem.vermont.gov/vtalert>. If you have any questions, please contact Chief Kyle Walker, Emergency Management Director, at 253-4315 or kwalker@stowevt.gov

Please be aware! Annual Meeting Change in Location: The Schools and Town will have separate annual meetings this year because the school district and Town boundaries are no longer the same. The Stowe Town Meeting will start at 8:00am on Tuesday, March 3rd upstairs in the Akeley Memorial Building Theater, where both the line item general fund budget and the Town's capital budget are discussed and voted on by floor vote. The Australian Ballot (paper ballot) voting for elected officials will start at 7:00am on March 3rd in the Akeley Building Memorial Hall (1st floor) and will go until 7:00pm. The parking spaces in front of the Akeley Building will be reserved for 15-minute parking to allow for drop-offs and short term voter parking. There is limited handicap parking in the back of the building. During the Annual Meeting, the spaces where the former village sub-station was located will be designated for handicapped parking. There is an elevator from the bottom floor to all levels of the building. We ask that able-bodied motorists park away from the building to enable people with mobility issues to park closer. Please remember that Stowe Elementary School will be closed, so parking will be available at the Elementary School (Memorial Park), the Rec Path Parking Lot behind the Community Church, the Depot Street Parking Lot and along the public streets. Childcare will be available at no charge at the Gale Rec Center. Please call the Rec Offices at 253-6138 or email kmillick@stowevt.gov if you intend to drop off your child, so that we may staff accordingly.

Surety of Service: Stowe has the appearance of a small town, but as our Public Work's Director often says, "Stowe has the infrastructure of a small Vermont city." Stowe also has one of the largest economies in Vermont. The Town maintains over 95 miles of public roads, 19 miles of sewer distribution system and 28 miles of water distribution system. Stowe has one of the largest property tax bases in Vermont. To highlight the growth in economic activity, in 2010 the Town's annual receipts for local option taxes was \$543,543 and currently is over \$1 million dollars.

Gone are the days when local farmers would hunker down to ride out a storm and go down into the root cellar to get food for dinner. Nothing made this clearer than the 2017 Windstorm. Much of Stowe was without electricity for several days. This impacted our water pump stations and the amount of water in our reservoirs. Not only did this put into question our ability to serve individual residences, but also guests at hotels and would strain our ability to fight a fire. We have since put emergency generators on all our water pump stations.

Rapidly the Town has gone from "making do" to the realization that it needs to be in a position to provide for the surety of service, even during emergencies. This started with the Equipment Reserve Fund. The municipal government has public health, safety and welfare responsibilities for our residents and visitors. Stowe's leadership realized the municipal government couldn't afford to run our equipment to the last mile and jump start them when we needed to get them out the door. The Town needed to ensure the roads were plowed and we could respond to emergencies in a timely manner. This requires reliable equipment and the Town needed to plan accordingly.

The issue came up again with the decline of EMS volunteers. In order to ensure Stowe EMS was able to ensure providing 24/7 response in a timely manner the Selectboard committed to at least one trained paid Emergency Medical Technician on staff at all times.

It was not too many years ago that using our town computers was as simple as turning them on in the morning and having an anti-virus program installed. We now have our data backed up and necessary cyber security measures in place. Our Public Safety Facility has a generator, so that the Public Safety Departments and Emergency Command Center can stay operational in the face of an emergency. Computers are not just a luxury anymore, they are our lifeblood and the Town must take all necessary steps to stay operational, especially in the worst of times, to protect public safety.

All of this takes organizational and fiscal capacity to meet modern challenges, expectations, laws and permit requirements and provides some context for our budget proposal being brought forth on Town Meeting Day. Please attend our Informational Meeting at 5:30 pm on February 24th in the Akeley Building (Town Hall).