

Municipal Corner

Volunteer Retirement: Thank you to the following Stowe emergency medical service providers who recently retired: Buck Lee (16 years of service), Peter Hall (25 years of service), Joanne Bradley (25 years of service), and Pat Boyle (25 years of service). All together that is 91 years of dedicated service. Please extend the communities appreciation to them for their service.

Also, thank you to Assistant Fire Chief John Schnee has also recently announced his retirement from the Fire Department after 26 years of service. During his time volunteering with the Town Of Stowe, John served as Training Officer, Lieutenant, Capitan and Assistant Chief with the Fire Department as well as time with Stowe EMS and Mountain Rescue.

Library Opening: The Stowe Free Library has tentatively planned a limited opening on September 1st with hours Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. A maximum of 10 patrons, masks required, will be able enter the library to browse the new collection and request less current items from the shelves. Curbside service will continue with 15-minute shifts at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. One computer will be available for public use with an advanced reservation.

Census: At this point in time, the national response rate for the 2020 Census is 63.1%. By comparison, Vermont's response rate is 56.7% and Stowe's is an abysmal 36.6%. Why does the Census matter? The results of the 2020 Census will help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding flow into communities every year for the next decade. That funding shapes many different aspects of every community. Think of your morning commute: Census results influence highway planning and construction, as well as grants for buses, subways, and other public transit systems. Or think of your local schools: Census results help determine how money is allocated for the Head Start program and for grants that support teachers and special education. The list goes on, including programs to support rural areas, to restore wildlife, to prevent child abuse, to prepare for wildfires, and to provide housing assistance for older adults. Please spend the 10 minutes it takes to fill out your Census form, whether you live in Stowe full-time or own a vacation home in Stowe. The form can be filled out online at <https://2020census.gov/>.

The Census Bureau has begun following up with households in Vermont that have not yet responded to the 2020 Census. Households can still respond by completing and mailing back the paper questionnaire they received, by responding online at 2020 census.gov, or by phone at 844-330-2020. Field data collection will end by September 30th. Self-response options will also close on that date to permit the commencement of data processing.

Civil Matter: The Town sometimes gets called to take care of a private property issues. We also sometimes get called about disputes between property owners particularly when it comes to property matters. Not every issue or land dispute is the responsibility of the public sector to regulate or resolve. Government is responsible is to protect the public interest, not private interests. The Town is in the *public* works business with the emphasis on public. If the issue does not fall within the municipalities' purview, then one neighbor can try to approach the other neighbor directly to try to resolve the matter or, if necessary, pursue a civil suit. The Town will get involved when it has the authority to act, and it is in the public interest to do so. Also, municipalities are sub-divisions of the State and can only regulate what they authorize us to. If a municipality is authorized to regulate something, then the elected leaders or the voters directly need to regulate it through adopting an ordinance.

Levels of Service: The Town of Stowe is about as full service of a municipality as you will see in Vermont. In addition to the normal array of municipal services (e.g. Highway, Water, Sewer, Library, Parks & Recreation, Fire, Police, EMS, Clerk/Treasurer, Planning, Zoning, and Assessing) the Town also has a municipal Electric and Mountain Rescue departments. We still receive calls from people surprised that we don't provide the array of services they might have been accustomed to in larger urban community's such as curb side trash pick-up or the regulation of property maintenance standards.

Excluding the Stowe Electric Department which has its own management, the Town of Stowe only has 62 full-time employees and a General Fund budget of \$13,014,744, a Water Operating Budget of \$1,333.409 and a Sewer Budget of \$1,541,753. With these resources the Town takes care of over 100 miles of public roads and associated infrastructure, treats public water and wastewater, protects public safety, and provides for cultural and recreational opportunities. We are also obligated to contribute to county taxes through the municipal budget. To provide more services would mean increases to the number of employees and the amount of property taxes to be raised, and to date the municipality has worked to balance services and your tax dollars.

Taxes: The FY'21 homestead tax rate is \$2.0722 for municipal, voter exemption, and schools. The FY'21 non-homestead tax rate is \$2.2318 for municipal, voter exemption, and schools. For a \$500,000 homestead property your tax bill breaks down as follows: \$2,175.00 municipal, \$26.00 voter exemption, and \$8,160.00 schools. For a \$500,000 non-homestead property your tax bill breaks down as follows: \$2,175.00 municipal, \$26.00 voter exemption, and \$8,958.00 schools. Of the school taxes, approximately 1/3 supports the local schools and 2/3 goes to the state education fund to support schools around Vermont.

Support Local Business: Local businesses are struggling as a result of the pandemic. Let's all do our part to support restaurants when we can by ordering take out or taking advantage of outdoor dining opportunities. Also, a number of retail stores are open, taking all precautions for safe shopping indoors and still offering curbside pickup for those who prefer that. Please consider before relying on the big online sources. Our hotels are also open to the degree permitted by the State. It is an excellent opportunity to staycation while they are offering packages to Vermonters.