

Municipal Corner

Retirement: Rich Baker has served as Stowe's Zoning Director since 2006 and has announced his retirement effective April 30, 2018. He was good enough to give me sufficient notice, so that we can find a qualified replacement before his departure.

The Zoning Administrator is an important job in a municipality. There is no reason to develop, zoning and subdivision regulations if no one follows them and they are not enforced. The Zoning Administrator works with applicants to help them understand the zoning regulations and ensures their applications are complete before going to the Development Review Board for their consideration. Once the Development Review Board approves their findings, it is the Zoning Administrator's responsibility to ensure compliance. It is not always easy to tell someone they are in violation and it can sometimes be a challenge to ensure compliance. Rich has also served as Stowe's Health Officer and E911 Coordinator where you face similar challenges.

Rich has always done his job in a professional even-handed manner. All people have been treated equally with an even temperament. Rich is not one to "shoot first and ask questions later." He has always provided a reasonable opportunity to come into compliance. If you didn't, he would enforce to protect the public interest. His advice to the DRB has always been based on what the zoning and subdivision regulations said, not his personal viewpoints.

What a lot of citizens may not realize is that Rich has always been willing to help out beyond his role as Zoning Administrator. Aside from his bachelor's degree in forestry and master's degree in land use planning, Rich has a master's degree in management of information systems. He has served as the staff person on Stowe's Universal Access Committee, Web Site Task Force, and helped the Cemetery Commission map their plots. He also assists with Stowe's water and sewer allocations. None of it he had to do, but often volunteered and did so without complaining. Thank you for your service.

Future Tax Payments: Please be advised that the Town of Stowe will not accept tax payments for property tax payments that have not already been billed. You can pay future installments for the current fiscal year that have been billed, but you can't pay taxes for future years that have not yet been billed. Towns are not authorized by law to do so. The assessed property value has not yet been established by the Listers for FY19, the budgets have not yet been approved by the voters and the tax levy has yet to be set.

FY'19 General Fund Operating & Capital Budget: At their December 18th meeting, I presented the Selectboard a draft operating and capital budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The Selectboard will deliberate on it at their January 8th and 22nd meetings. All meetings are open to the public and the January 22nd meeting will include a public hearing. The proposed operating budget projects to keep the municipal tax rate the same as the current fiscal year while maintaining the town's current level of service.

The Selectboard is considering several capital projects: Village Sidewalk / Curb Final Design, Rec Path Gables Bridge Underpass Feasibility Study and Conceptual Design, and reconstructing the Memorial Park Tennis Courts. The Village Sidewalk / Curb project is being advanced due to

the condition of the existing sidewalks / curbs and to bring them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If coordinated with the repaving of the road, it should also improve the on-street drainage. VTrans is tentatively planning on paving Stowe Class 1 highways, including Main Street, in 2020. The goal is to prepare for a bond vote in November 2018, so that the voters can consider reconstructing the sidewalks and curbs along the Class 1 highways and possibly other sidewalks in the Village prior to the state paving the roads. This is a very involved project with a lot of detailed planning, especially if the town also decides to advance the burying / relocating of overhead utilities on Main Street.

When the Gables Bridge was replaced the Town asked the State to build the abutments to potentially accommodate running the Recreation Path under the Mountain Road. In order to advance the project we need to lay out the routing of the path, develop a better understanding of any utilities that may have to be moved, and obtain the necessary easements.

The Memorial Park tennis courts are in poor condition. The intent of the project is to replace the tennis courts, lighting and fencing.

The FY'19 Budget and Capital Program letters of transmittals and budget summaries can be found on the Stowe municipal website at www.townofstowevt.org. Please contact me at 253-7350 or csafford@townofstoweevermont.org if you have any questions.

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