

Municipal Corner – 9-22-16

Town Meeting Survey: The Town Meeting Task Force has been working all summer on how to increase participation at Annual Meeting. They developed a survey to seek your input. You can find a link on the Stowe Town website (www.townofstovevt.org) or obtain a hard copy at Town Hall. Please take the time to fill it out.

Automated Fire Alarms: Stowe is fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteer firefighters. Every time they get toned out they are leaving their families or jobs to respond to a call. A major source of their calls is due to false alarms related to malfunctioning automated hard wired systems. You can help avoid this by having your hard wired automated fire alarm inspected on an annual basis to help ensure it is working properly. If your automated hard wire alarm does go off, please don't turn it off until the Fire Department shows up, so they can assess the situation to ensure there is not a fire. Finally, if you have an automated hard wire alarm system, please remember to install a "lock box" with a key on the outside of your building. This enables the Fire Department to gain access to your building. To obtain a lock box application, you can contact Mark Sgantas, Fire Chief, at 253-4315. There is no cost for the permit, but you must buy the lock box.

Meet the Authors: The Stowe Free Library is wrapping up its 150th Anniversary Celebration with a Meet the Authors Program on Saturday, September 24th at 3:00 p.m. This event will feature a panel of four local authors, Reeve Lindbergh, Ellen Stimson, Willem Lange, and Julia Shipley, each presenting a brief talk on the importance of libraries, books, and reading. The event moderator and Vermont librarian extraordinaire, Jessamyn West, will challenge the authors with a few lightning round questions. Attendees will have an opportunity to ask questions, buy a few books, retain some autographs, and partake in some light refreshments.

Quiet Path Bridge: The reason the Quiet Path Bridge is elevated is so that the bottom of the structure is 1' above the 100 year flood level due to permit requirements. This project is anticipated to be substantially complete later this month and will enable safer passage than walking along the road.

Paving: The Town currently budgets \$328,000 per year for paving. This year we also received a \$175,000 Class 2 Town Highway Paving Grant from VTAOT. To give you an idea of the cost of paving, the recently completed projects on Randolph Road cost \$158,000, South Hollow Road cost \$250,000 and Luce Hill Road from Mountain Road to Barrows Road cost \$58,000. The Town was able to do more paving this fiscal year because of the grant and the fact that paving prices are better than they have been in recent years due to the decline in the price of oil, but it is still very expensive. This year we repaved 2.2 of the Town's approximately 35 miles of paved roads. The Town Offices gets numerous requests each year for paving. Public Works prioritizes the roads to be paved within the allowable budget. Some of the major criteria Public Works considers are the condition of the road and traffic volume. The climate in Vermont is tough on roads. There is no question that more money could justifiably be applied to paving each year. With this being said, the Selectboard struggles each year with numerous competing needs while trying to manage the municipal tax rate.

FY'18 Budget (7/1/17 -6/30/18): If you are interested in the amount spent on paving and other budgetary topics, the Selectboard will begin their budget deliberations towards the end of December and continue them through January of the following year. The meetings are open to the public. They are held at the Akeley Building at 5:30pm the second and fourth Monday of every month. You are welcome to attend and provide input throughout this process. Ultimately it is up to you, the voters, to decide at Annual Meeting how much you are willing to tax yourself and for which services. It is always held the first Tuesday in March at the Stowe High School Auditorium.

Some of the major challenges the town faces that will need to be addressed over time are the decline of EMS/Fire volunteers, the Town's gravel pit running out of gravel within the next few years, and increasing storm water management cost. Stowe is within the Lake Champlain Drainage basin and is required to be part of the Lake's clean-up efforts. This will require additional maintenance and improvements to both our gravel and paved storm water drainage systems. The requirements and costs are yet to be fully understood, but are likely to be significant not only in Stowe, but statewide.

Please feel free to stop by the Town Offices or stop me in the street when you see me if you have any questions, input or concerns you would like to express. I will try to get you to the right person or body if I can't help you myself or if someone else has jurisdiction.