

Memo

To: Mayor and Council
cc: Department Heads
From: Pat MacQueen, City Manager
Date: January 2, 2012
Re: Manager's Report

Finance Director

I am happy to report that Patty Chase who is currently the Interim Finance Director has been selected after a difficult process to fill the position of Finance Director. Patty did not initially apply for the position but after we ran into difficulty filling the position, she has agreed to take it on. She was hired as the Assistant Comptroller less than a year ago.

Patty and the people in the Finance Department with the help of former Finance Director Blandine Shallow have seen the Department through a very difficult time since the resignation of Betty Domino. They have managed the day to day operations, caught the Department up in a number of important areas, obtained a tax rate and provided the information needed by the auditors. That is really the tip of the iceberg of what they have had to deal with. Patty, although she is still learning the ropes, has proven that she is up to the task of managing and improving the Finance Department. Needless to say, we will need to provide her and the Department with a good deal of support.

Rite Aid

Fire Chief Trull has been told by Couture Construction that the official start of the Rite Aid Demolition will start this Wednesday January 4th. They have equipment on site and have torn down a chimney thus far.

Irene Reimbursement

We were happy to receive a check from the State of New Hampshire (FEMA) reimbursing us for \$16,110.49 for our costs during the Irene storm this past fall.

Legislative Issues – Retained Bills from 2011 Session

Pole Tax Exemption – SB 133

The 2012 legislative session will begin this week. Municipalities need to be on the look out for any attempt by telecommunications lobbyists to get the legislature to take SB 133 which would continue the pole tax exemption off the table from the 2011 session which is where it is currently sits. Efforts last year to get rid of this were successful to the extent that taxpayers are now saving \$3M in taxes which the telecommunications did not pay but now are paying statewide. However, the deal was too sweet for those companies not to try to continuing the exemption if they can find a way to do it.

HB 514 Limiting Entry onto Private Land

Because of a landowner in Grafton County had part of his land declared a prime wetland without any notice that the town was reviewing his land, this bill was created to try to ensure that that would not happen again. Unfortunately, in doing so it would create myriad other problems for municipalities, particularly with respect to municipal functions such as assessing. (Attached is a letter from our contract assessor Avitar delineating the difficulties that this bill would cause for assessors.) While the problem that led to this bill likely needs to be addressed, HB 514 should be opposed because it creates more problems that it solves. SB 19 deals with the problem cited above without creating all the other problems that HB514 creates.

HB 293 to Limit Pollution Control Exemption

This is a retained NHMA policy bill which would have phased out the pollution control exemption which is a simple tax giveaway to certain industries not enjoyed by other tax payers. The Municipal and County Government Committee by a small majority recommended that this bill be "Inexpedient to Legislate", which would kill it. The

committee minority recommends that the bill be passed but with an amendment which would leave the exemption but limit it to pollution devices which have as their sole purpose the control of pollution. While elimination of this exemption would be appropriate and fairest route to take, at least having some restriction on the current total exemption would be better than having nothing at all.

Manager's Timekeeping

Attached.