



November 2008



Jodi Ross
Town Manager
978-692-5500

Town Offices Update



- Assessors
- Board of Health
- Collector
- Finance Dept
- Human Resources
- Town Clerk
- Town Manager

are at the Millennium Building at 23 Depot Street.

- Building
- Conservation
- Planning
- Zoning

are at the Highway Garage at 28 North Street.

There are no more scheduled moves at this time.

Visit westfordma.gov for the latest information.

Dear Westford Residents

As we begin our process of preparing our FY10 operating and capital budgets, we are aware that we are in the midst of a difficult economic climate. Not only are we in a situation where "fixed" costs (utilities, health insurance, pension, and other costs) are increasing at a higher rate than Proposition 2 ½ allows, we are also facing level or decreased local receipts, and possibly significant cuts in state aid.

By adhering to sound fiscal management practices, the town of Westford is in an enviable position of having strong cash reserves. We have relied upon Free Cash to balance our operating budget for several years, and while it is not ideal to fund operating expenses with non-recurring revenue sources, it did not represent a serious situation as reserves were being replenished annually. Unfortunately our projections show this scenario will not continue. With the current state of our national, state and local economy, which in turn results in a lack of new growth and a decrease in local revenues, we are trending flat for the next several years.

In consideration of these factors, I have asked department heads, boards and committees to submit fiscally conservative budgets for FY10. Some departments should be able to reduce expenses without disruption of town services, while others may not. I have asked that budgets reflect streamlined operations with specific cost reductions outlined, while including innovative ways to maintain services at current levels where possible. I have also asked all department heads to use innovative ideas to increase revenue to the town, including evaluating all fees to insure we are in line with our "market basket" communities.

Seeking this type of reduction will help to prepare us if state aid is not level-funded for FY10. If state aid is reduced, we have built in a safety-net of being able to supplement our budget (by a certain extent) if necessary. We will monitor the situation carefully over the next several months, and will be prepared to make adjustments to our budget accordingly.

I have received support from the Board of Selectmen to form a Capital Planning Committee to assist with the process of organizing, maintaining, and prioritizing all capital requests of the town. This should help us to keep track of our present and future capital needs, and plan accordingly, rather than in a reactive way.

Many town departments have already begun implementing cost control measures. Some of these include negotiating a 3.1% increase in the town's health insurance premium, going out to bid and locking in reduced rates for both electricity and natural gas, reducing the usage of town vehicles, bidding and negotiating reduced tipping fees, and upholding a town-wide hiring freeze. I have asked our department heads to recap some of these cost-savings initiatives in this newsletter. Going forward, I can promise you we will examine every department for possible cost savings to get us through these tough economic times.

As we begin the FY10 budgeting process, we recognize it is now more important than ever to be creative and consider all avenues of efficiency in the way we operate. I have challenged our department heads to use all financial resources available while preparing their budgets. This promises to be a challenging budget season, but we are enthusiastic about embracing it, and presenting a balanced budget to carefully manage the town, and pave our way to the future and the challenges that await us!

Sincerely,
Jodi Ross
jross@westfordma.gov



Westford Health Department Highlights Cost Saving Efforts

Flu Season- MRC Volunteers and Medicare Billing

During flu season, we need to staff our series of town flu clinics. The Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corp members donate their time to staff the clinics and administer the vaccine. These volunteers provided considerable savings to the community over the past few years because we did not need to contract nursing staff to immunize approximately 2000 residents who attend the clinics. Last year alone, our MRC volunteered at all 6 town clinics, which saved \$6480. We also averaged 6 nonmedical volunteers per clinic to process paperwork and assist with the clinic flow. Please thank them when you receive your flu or pneumonia shot this year!

In addition, although not required, the Health Department bills Medicare and a few senior insurance programs for administration fees for the

flu and pneumonia shots for those seniors who qualify for reimbursement. Last year we received close to \$13,000, which we returned to the general funds.

AED program

Understanding the need to have AEDs in all public buildings, the health department and schools did an outreach to community organizations and were able to raise funds to get 10 AEDs in all schools and town departments. This produced a savings of over \$20,000. We also collaborated with the AED company, and received credit for additional units purchased by businesses and churches in town. For every 10 purchased, the town receives another free AED. CPR/ First Aid training has been arranged for employees through collaboration with EMS 2000 and the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps.

Elderly Dental Program

Grants were written to

provide free dental services to uninsured or underinsured elderly in Westford. Collaboration with area dentists provided dental services, materials and support. Over the past 4 years we have serviced over 125 elderly with this program.

Health Fair

Our yearly health fair (which alternates between residents and town employees every other year) provides an opportunity for residents and staff to receive free services from area health providers and hospitals. All services are donated by providers and area organizations and club sponsors, which provide funding for incidental costs. Each year we identify numerous medical problems and make appropriate referrals.

The Health Department will continue to look for resources to supplement town funding so that we can continue to provide the highest level of services for Westford.



Sandy Collins (MRC Director) and Nancy Burns (MRC Coordinator) welcome volunteers.

"The Health Department will continue to look for resources to supplement town funding so that we can continue to provide the highest level of services for Westford."

Housing Authority Agreement Saves Money for Permitting Budget

Town Meeting approved the transfer of \$30,000 from personal services to expenses in the Permitting Budget to fund the agreement between the Town of Westford and the Westford Housing Authority.

Under this agreement, Westford Housing

Authority will provide all services and functions necessary to all town boards and officers including the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust Fund in order to serve as the Town's primary affordable housing

agency. This partnership will save the town approximately \$20,000.00 per year.

Permitting Department cut down the number of cell phones used by staff from 8 to 4. Further, the department also pulled back the only take-home car.



Water Department

The Westford Water Department has always strived to be energy efficient and to keep energy costs down. When our two water treatment facilities were constructed, they were outfitted with programmable thermostats, motion sensing light fixtures and low flow toilets. The treatment facilities are also operated as efficiently as possible through the use of a computer system (SCADA System) maintained by our Licensed Treatment Operators. The SCADA System maintains designated chemical feed dosages in order to use the minimum amount possible; operates pumps

and other equipment only when needed to save electricity and to prevent overflow of storage tanks; and identifies periods of required maintenance to ensure all equipment works properly.

In off-peak seasons, wells may be shut down and/or rotated in their use in order to reduce electricity demand. And whenever possible we will run only one of two pumps that pump treated water out to the distribution system.

Most of our eight wells have variable speed drives (VSD) on the pump motors which help conserve electricity. VSDs allow the electric motors to run at reduced speeds and use

less energy. Also, our conversion to radio reading of water meters has increased efficiency, reduced revisits to customers, allows us to complete meter reading in a shorter time, and may give us the potential to move to monthly billing.

Within our office current cost-saving measures that we implement include: purchasing reconditioned printer and copier cartridges; using the double-sided printing and copying feature; turning off all lights, computers, monitors, copiers, printers, etc., at end of the day; and performing custodial duties in-house as we do not hire an external custodial contractor.



Highway Department

The Highway Department has been very busy this construction season. We have taken advantage of an early and somewhat dry spring to do our paving projects. This represented a big payoff on the amount of work we were able to accomplish before the July 1st massive price increases of asphalt products. We have also taken a pointer from the squirrels around Town and have filled out salt sheds with our yearly tonnage before the price increases and shortages that appeared in late

September.

The Highway Department working in conjunction with the new Town Manager, Jodi Ross, and Superintendent of Schools Bill Olsen has procured a very attractive fixed price for the next 4 years on natural gas for all large Town buildings. This should represent the same savings to the taxpayers that the combined electric bid of 2007 achieved. The total savings for calendar year 2008 was approximately \$180,000.00. As we

move toward Day Light Savings time if you notice a streetlight that is not working and it is connected to overhead wiring (telephone poles and other wires) please contact National Grid at www.nationalgridus.com.

If you are on a system that is serviced by underground wiring and the streetlight is not working, please notify the Highway Department office at (978) 692-5520 so that we can address the situation.



Building Department

The building department has been working for the past several months to help control costs from both our office and to the residents and contractors that utilize our services.

The department is now online with permitting, and, for simple types of

permits, such as gas, plumbing, electrical and some minor building permits, this means that an individual can submit the permit online. This saves the consumer and town both time and money.

The department also has

gone partially green. The new Hybrid Ford Escape that the building department now has gets much better gas mileage than an old cruiser. Even the 2nd vehicle that we use is a newer cruiser that gets much better mileage than the 1990's versions that were once used.

Police Department

The following is a brief synopsis of initiatives the Police Department has taken to address the gas issues. In the last 6 months we have:

Purchased new cruisers that get better gas mileage through technological advances (Multidisplacemt system). Vehicle idles at 4 cylinders and ramps up as needed. The manufacture claims it

will reduce fuel consumption by 11%.

Installed the Automatic vehicle locator (AVL) in the marked cruisers. It monitors mileage and helps project future needs.

Successfully reduced the contracted rates with our gas vendor from high test to regular.

Currently reducing our fleet by 26%; (down size)

this should help reduce fuel consumption, maintenance, equipment and insurance costs with these vehicles.

Ordered a building Energy Audit.

We continue to explore the possibilities of other additional cost saving measures such as the use of motor cycles for patrol.



Technology Department

The Technology department continues to work with all departments to make them more efficient. We helped the Finance Department transition to self-mailing checks and an auto folder, saving time and money. We are currently working on automating more of the payroll process.

All town computers and most school computers now use the more energy efficient flat panel monitors. Our five year replacement plan will upgrade the remaining school computers within

the next two to three years. All computers use power saving and are shut down at the end of each day.

We utilize remote troubleshooting tools whenever possible to reduce mileage supporting the various departments.

We replaced all of our standalone servers with Blade architecture, saving on maintenance, support, replacement and energy costs.

We replaced our leased T1 Wide Area Network with fiber, saving the town

and school over \$30,000 a year.

By expanding our IP Phone system, performing extensive audits and going out to bid on our telephone lines, we have saved over \$35,000 a year over the past two years.

The Technology department has developed many of its own database solutions over the past year. Not only do these save annual support costs, but they have opened the possibility to generate revenue from other towns.



Engineering Department

The Engineering Department has recently been involved in a regional Request for Proposal (RFP) for Solid Waste Disposal with twelve other communities. This RFP was a competitive process with the objective of obtaining the best price possible for solid waste disposal. The Town of Westford currently has a contract that expires at the

end of FY10. Our cost per ton of disposal for this year is \$71.50 and will increase to \$73.00 per ton in FY 10. Through this competitive process as well as further negotiation with the lowest proposal we have been able to lock in a price of \$67.00 per ton in FY 2011 with an annual increase of \$2.00 per ton over 5 years. This will provide the town a cost savings of

approximately \$200,000 of a five year period. The Engineering Department would also like to thank Hal Schreiber, a resident of Westford, who has been an invaluable resource for the Town. His knowledge and experience have been crucial in moving this forward and helping Westford realize these savings.

Parks and Recreation

Energy saving measures have taken place at the Parks, Recreation, & Cemetery Department office at 35 Town Farm Road.

With four heating systems, reducing the use of gas and electricity was the primary concern for implementing savings.

All staff have been

relocated to one side of the building to reduce heating levels in other portions of the building.

Programmable thermostats have been installed on all heating systems as well as the lowering of radiator settings.

Repairs to broken window panes have been

addressed.

A temporary wall has been installed to reduce the loss of heat to the upstairs portion of the building.

When staff leave at the end of the day, all lights are turned off, computers shut down, doors closed and shades lowered.



Human Resources

Through the competitive bid process, the Human Resources department was able to negotiate the health insurance

premiums through MIIA from 8.1% to 5.6% and finally 3.1%.

This results in the town

saving \$178,125 in FY09 and \$309,700 in FY10. This rate is well below trend and surrounding communities.



WPS "OBSERVE & CONSERVE" ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The objective of the "Observe and Conserve" Program is to reduce our fuel and electricity consumption for the 2008-2009 school year. The rapidly increasing cost of energy significantly impacts funding available for direct instructional services to our students. It is a program that involves all of us. We can make a significant difference in helping our school system reduce energy costs.



How Does The Observe and Conserve Program Work?

Most of the "Conserving" can be simply accomplished by "Observing" wasteful energy practices in your building. Research studies have indicated that the conserving practices of people are the most important contributing factors to reducing energy consumption. The following list presents ideas that you can use to help reduce energy consumption* Please send me your suggestions for conserving fuel and electricity and I'll include them with this list throughout the year, and recognize your efforts.

- Close shades, blinds and curtains each night to retain residual heat
- Shutoff lights when leaving a room, office, etc.
- Shut off the copying equipment at the close of each day
- Turn off coffee pots when possible in teachers' rooms and offices
- Keep books, papers and materials away from univents, heating pipes, etc.
- Don't operate portable personal heaters
- Make sure documents being photocopied are free of errors. Rerunning mistakes uses electricity and wastes paper
- Turn off vending machines when possible (vending machine operation can cost nearly \$500 per year!)
- Notify the building custodian of any door(s) that need weather-stripping
- Don't leave outside doors wedged-open
- Make sure windows are closed tightly
- At night, were possible, only the areas of building being cleaned by night custodians should be illuminated
- Thermostats during the day will be set at 68 degrees
- Night set-back temperatures in buildings should be 55 degrees
- Consolidate or minimize the numbers of hot plates, microwaves, plant growing lights, fish tanks, etc
- Custodians should cycle HVAC equipment at different times
- Kitchen and custodial staff should keep refrigeration coils clean
- Kitchen staff should turn on ovens, vent hoods, warmers, and mixers just prior to use
- Laminators, kilns and tech-ed equipment should be turned off when not in use

* Sources: School Operations and Maintenance: Best Practices For Controlling Energy Costs: Report Prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy and authored by H. Powell Energy Assoc., Westford, MA; Princeton Energy Resources International, Rockville, MD; Alliance to Save Energy, Washington, D.C.



Fire Department

All vehicles are housed at the fire station(s) and are not taken home with the exception of the Chiefs vehicle which is still kept within the boundaries of the Town of Westford.

All efforts are made to consolidate vehicle trips. Smaller vehicles are used when practicable saving on the consumption of gas/diesel fuel and additional wear and tear.

Car pooling is done whenever possible (i.e. Meetings, training, inspections, etc.)

Maintenance is kept up by fire personnel (i.e. tire pressure, oil changes, filters, etc) for the best and efficient operation of all the department vehicles. Repairs are completed whenever possible in-house providing a saving from having to send out to a more costly repair shop.

All personnel have been required over the years to shut off vehicles whenever

possible and not idle for any long period of time.

It must be noted that winter conditions will dictate the necessity to having the fire engines be continuously idling to provide pump operations and circulate the tank water through the fire pump so that the fire pump does not freeze and does not damage the pump causing more cost to the town for repairs or replacements.

GPS/AVL has been added and we are looking at this technology as a tool to use in future budgets.

Fuels for the fire stations are primarily oil or natural gas. Some 21,000 square feet of buildings are heated or cooled during the year. In garage areas thermostats are lowered to the lowest setting and in habitable areas thermostats are automatic to raise and lower when building/room would

normally be occupied / unoccupied. Thermostats are usually set lower in the winter and higher in the summer for cooling (in areas that are occupied only).

Parking lot lights have been reduced whenever possible or have been completely shut off. Most are on outside light sensors or timers to turn on / off automatically. Interior lights are only used whenever needed and does not produce a safety issue for employees.

Windows and doors have been replaced over the years to assist with reducing fuel costs. Garage doors are open on limited bases and are closed immediately to minimize heat loss.

THESE PRACTICES HAVE BEEN IN PLACE FOR WELL OVER 10 YEARS IN THIS DEPARTMENT.

CHECK OUT THE COST SAVINGS AT THE J. V. FLETCHER LIBRARY!

The J. V. Fletcher Library has progressively been updating and streamlining its systems – both facility and functional systems – to save time, energy, supplies and town resources. To date the library has:

- installed new energy-efficient fluorescent lights to replace the old metal halide ceiling lights – which also increased lighting
- upgraded all ballasts and fluorescent lighting in the collection stack areas

- installed three new energy efficient boilers along with a new energy management system and computerized thermostats
- centralized all public printing and photocopying on a vended machine
- centralized and reduced staff printers
- automated all materials ordering under the statewide regional bid system
- migrated to paperless conferencing, networking, and communications
- converted forms, files and manuals to networked on-line documents

Circulation and daily visits to the library continue to increase – one of the biggest savings the library could realize would be if more patrons utilized email notification – of holds, notices, and renewals. Convert your record to email notification – saving postage, paper, labor and supplies – help us save the Town money – and save the environment as well!

