

SELECTMEN'S REPORT

A special THANK YOU to all the Town employees, Board members and volunteers work in various capacities throughout the year to make Bartlett a great community in which to live, work, play, and raise a family.

As always, the Selectmen have tried to craft a budget that, coupled with the warrant articles, will not have an adverse effect on our tax rate. With the amount of new construction in a slump and the fact that the State has cut back on revenues to the town means the town, school and county should be extra vigilant this year in trying to hold the line. While our proposed budget shows an increase of approximately 4% which is more than we like, it is mainly due to the large increase at the Transfer Station. However, by combining the warrant articles proposed by the Selectmen (not including petitioned articles) and the proposed budget, it represents an approximate increase of only \$10,000 from last year which will have little effect on the tax rate. The actual expenditures in last year's budget were approximately \$40,000 less than what we had budgeted.

Now more explanation about the Transfer Station situation. The contract that was approved and signed back in 1984 between the Towns of Bartlett and Jackson provided that capital and operating expenses be calculated according to the equalized valuation of each town. This is roughly a 70% Bartlett and 30% Jackson split. From the very beginning, the two towns agreed to a 50/50 split for capital expenses. In fact, that agreement was ratified by the Selectmen from both towns in 2004. For the past few years, income at the Transfer Station has been sufficient to operate the station without any additional town expenditures. Recently, the Town of Jackson has requested that we abide by the terms of the contract, notwithstanding the agreement regarding capital expenses. They wish to have all expenses (capital and operating) and all employees operate with the equalized valuation process. This means that Bartlett would pay 70% of the costs of the Transfer Station, both operating and capital expenses.

It appears that the total increase would be about \$40,000 per year to the Town of Bartlett for operating expenses. While it could be argued that some operating expenses and some employee expenses should be at a different split than 50/50, the Bartlett Selectmen do not agree that the capital expenses should be on a 70/30 split. While some equipment may wear out faster due to use by both towns, some items such as buildings, concrete work, etc., should be done on a 50/50 basis. The big question, and one we don't have an answer for at the moment, is whether Bartlett can operate the Transfer Station on its own for less money. We have included the extra money in this year's budget and it may be prudent to try it for a year or so and see how it works out budget-wise. Having the Transfer Station run as its own entity makes sense in many ways, such as staffing, but there may be some down sides when it comes to expenses. Now more than ever we ask everyone to comply with the mandatory recycling ordinance -it saves you money!

Unfortunately, we are asking for \$5,500.00 which will finally complete the emergency generator project. It was discovered that the original method of fueling the generator had some flaws and while it would have worked, it was not entirely dependable. Since the generator was purchased to provide an emer-

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agency shelter and for use at the school, the Selectmen felt we needed to install the most dependable fuel supply system possible.

Once again legal fees went way over budget last year and while we still have some pending issues, most have been resolved and most cases in the town's favor. The issues in the Red River Development v. Town of Bartlett case have been decided in the Town's favor except for one and hopefully that will be resolved soon. The Lil Man v. Town of Bartlett cases have been resolved although issues in that area still remain outstanding due to appeals. We remain hopeful that this year our legal expenses and cases will see a decrease.

Major roadwork in cooperation with the Lower Bartlett Water Precinct saw rebuilding and rehabilitation of Glen Ledge Road and roads in Linderhof. The town also did improvements on Dundee Road, Alpenstrausse, Cow Hill Road, Scenic Vista, Thorn Hill Road, Covered Bridge Lane and Cobb Farm Road. Additionally, over 700 feet of new culverts were installed. While we always wait until spring to make the final determination of upcoming projects, it looks like the major work will be done on Cobb Farm Road and Dundee Road along with installation of the final coat of hot top on Glen Ledge Road. Other problem areas in town will also see work done.

In this year's list of warrant articles, there are two petitioned articles that the Selectmen are not supporting. One is the Bartlett Community Preschool, which is a privately operated entity located in the school. We are opposed to this article because the Preschool is privately run and taxpayers should not subsidize daycare services and the more appropriate place for this article may be the school warrant, however, this article may be disallowed by the NH Department of Revenue Administration. The other petitioned article asks for \$3,000 for Carroll County Transit. Since the proposed service does not include any areas in the Town of Bartlett, the Selectmen are very much opposed to subsidizing other towns in the county that may be benefiting from this service. Not only is there no service to Bartlett, all the towns in the county are being asked for the same dollar amount regardless of the size of the town or level of service proposed for that town.

The amount of new construction continues to decline and along with unstable property values, it means that we have to be extra careful with our spending both at the town, school, and county level. We most likely will not have an increase in property value, and in conjunction with reduced revenues, this means it will be increasingly difficult to maintain a low tax rate.

Board of Selectmen
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