

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
Jodi Ross



As the year 2006 draws to a close, we are immersed in FY2008 budget preparations and the formulation of the annual town meeting warrant. Although Bolton is facing several significant capital expenditures for municipal infrastructure needs over the next couple of years, the town's finances remain strong. With the cooperation of all department heads and board and committee members, we were able to submit a balanced budget totaling just over \$16 million for 2007, which represented a 5% increase over FY2006. In June we were assigned an "Aa3 bond rating" by Moody's Investors Service, who recognized our solid financial position as a result of "conservative budgeting practices and improved financial and operational controls". One of these practices included appropriating \$75,000 at our annual town meeting into our stabilization fund, which helps us to maintain a healthy reserve fund balance. These reserve funds help protect us from requiring an operational override in the future. Another improvement included the selectmen establishing a Capital Planning Committee, who is charged with helping us to prioritize our upcoming capital purchases, assisting with communicating these needs, and the associated financial impact to Bolton residents.

Looking back over the past twelve months, I would like to share some of the highlights and more significant accomplishments that have been achieved as the result of the successful collaboration, initiative, and tireless efforts of your town officials and employees.

The year began with the Wastewater Treatment Plant Committee investigating municipal land for the most appropriate site to locate the Florence Sawyer and Emerson School treatment plant and leach field. The committee and the selectmen determined that "the sheep field" was the best location, as it provided the greatest capacity with the least environmental impact. The committee also collected data from the Board of Health on

all septic systems in the downtown area to see whether or not the plant could support these residents hooking up in the future. The committee toured several facilities which helped them to narrow the technology choice to the final selection. The year ended with the Groundwater Discharge Permit being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Protection, with construction scheduled to begin in the spring of 2007.

During the winter months, the police chief search committee reviewed 98 resumes for the position of Bolton police chief. As a member of that committee, I can attest to the long hours and careful scrutiny of prospective applicants this group put into their assigned task. The committee presented three finalists to the Board of Selectmen, who, after interviewing the candidates, unanimously selected Vincent Alfano, formerly a lieutenant from Framingham, as our new Bolton police chief. As luck would have it, Chief Alfano had also recently relocated to Bolton which only reinforced the board's decision. From all accounts, it appears that Chief Alfano has assimilated very well into the department and the town as a whole.

After significant effort by several town officials and the Schartner and Nicewicz families, the receipt of a municipal grant, and funding authorized by the town, we successfully established an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the Schartner and Nicewicz farms. In addition, the town received the added benefit of securing trail easements on both properties. A special thank you to Bob Schartner and his family, and Ken Nicewicz and his family for their cooperation and assistance with helping the town achieve this commendable goal.

In an attempt to help control the rising costs of town employee health insurance, the selectmen appointed an Insurance Advisory Committee to research the effect on our retirees of adopting Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 32B, section 18 which would require retirees of the town to join a senior health plan, and Medicare, if eligible. This committee has been charged with thoroughly examining the issue and then bringing a recommendation back to the selectmen.

The annual town meeting in May resulted in two affirmative debt exclusion votes, one for \$2.5 million for the design and construction of the wastewater treatment plant, and the other for \$3.5 million for the expansion of the Bolton public library. The Board of Selectmen and Library Trustees appointed nine members to the Library Construction Committee to oversee the project, who began holding organizational meetings in December.

In June, Gigi Bonazzoli and Greg Caless retired as co-directors of the Bolton ambulance department. A gala retirement party was held at the International Golf Course that included speakers reciting the countless extraordinary actions these two gentlemen had contributed to the department and town as a whole through the years. Citing our town's increasing population, and the increasing difficulty in finding volunteers to staff the ambulance and fire department during the daytime hours, the town generously approved hiring Bolton's first full-time EMT/firefighter. In August, we hired David Farrell (a resident of Bolton and already on the "call" ambulance/fire department) to work full time

in the fire station. Dave has been kept very busy during the past five months assisting the new ambulance director, Gery Wilson, and fire chief, John Stephenson, in ensuring Bolton's residents are properly protected.

After repeated power outages, National Grid proposed a plan to undertake an aggressive tree pruning plan in the spring to hopes of improving the situation. The selectmen were presented with their action plan, affected residents were notified, and they commenced with their work.

After performing a cost/benefit analysis, the Assessors issued a Request for Proposals for a principal assessor, and ultimately hired Harald Scheid of Regional Resource Group, Inc. as the contracted principal assessor for the town. We have been impressed with the service levels Harald and his company provide to our residents, and look forward to many years of continued mutual benefit.

After many meetings and repeated drafts, the Board of Selectmen, with town meeting approval, entered a written lease agreement with the Nashoba Regional School District. Lancaster and Stow were a part of the process and signed similar leases at the same time. This lease protects both the town and the NRSD by spelling out agreements that had previously been only verbal.

After numerous requests for transportation by the town's senior population, the selectmen approved joining Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, which will allow a van to be used by Bolton's seniors and disabled residents for a nominal fee. The Advisory Committee approved a transfer of funds to allow this new service to begin once drivers are hired and trained.

In 2006, in response to numerous residents' requests, the Board of Health began offering flu shots, for a small fee, to all residents.

The Board of Selectmen adopted Meeting Guidelines and a Visitor's Orientation Guide at the suggestion of a facilitator we hired. The purpose of these documents was to help us with the structure, control, and productivity of selectmen's meetings.

The master plan was completed and distributed to all boards and committees, and ultimately printed and available on the town's website: www.townofbolton.com.

The year ended with the release of a Request for Proposals seeking to allow the construction of a cell tower at the transfer station site in an attempt to generate revenue for the town.

Some of the most enjoyable aspects of my job are the social opportunities. I became better acquainted with the seniors who attend the senior center located in the Bolton Country Manor, and those who volunteer in the town hall. As we did last year, the town employees once again hosted a holiday get-together for the town seniors that was a

wonderful occasion to eat, relax, chat, and get to know the many interesting people who live in our town. The stories they have to tell are fascinating!

As of January 2007, I will have completed three years in Bolton as your town administrator. These years have been very fulfilling as I have witnessed our town evolve in many ways. I would like to close by thanking the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee for their confidence and support of me in my position as town administrator. I would also like to thank all of the town officials, department heads, and town employees for their cooperation and hard work. I truly believe these people are Bolton's most valuable asset. The dedication and commitment they show, without a thought to personal recognition, never ceases to amaze me, and continues to make Bolton the special community it is. Thank you for continuing to allow me the opportunity to serve you.

Financial Statement			
July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006			
Salary			
Appropriated			\$84,832.00
Expended			<u>\$83,547.04</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund			\$ 1,284.96
Wages			
Appropriated			\$70,702.00
Expended			<u>\$69,421.94</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund			\$ 1,280.06
Expenses			
Appropriated			\$10,600.00
Expended	Training	\$2,870.00	
	Disability Insurance	967.12	
	In-State Travel	27.00	
	Dues	202.57	
	Meetings	38.13	
	Supplies	1,156.45	
	Purchase of Services	3,561.65	
	Miscellaneous	169.04	
	Travel	1,200.00	<u>\$ 8,370.84</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund			\$ 2,229.16