

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

To the Citizens of Milton

June 30, 2008

The makeup of the Board of Selectmen remained Kathy Fagan, John Shields and Marion McEttrick in fiscal 2008 with the re-election of Marion McEttrick in April 2007. Kathy Fagan was elected Chair and John Shields was elected Secretary in May 2008.

In fiscal 2008 the Board of Selectmen was one of the most active in recent memory with attention focused primarily on confronting financial challenges and engaging in long-term planning. Great strides were made in the areas of cash control, reducing duplicative and inefficient government practices. The Board pushed for commercial development that would improve the quality of life of our residents while also improving our commercial tax base. Through the hard work of many municipal employees and elected officials, we turned around a negative free cash start to the year of -\$32,000 into a \$400,000 surplus during the course of the same year, while at the same time reducing overtime expenses and better managing our expenditures. We were rewarded for these efforts by maintaining our AA Bond rating and earning low bond premiums while bond ratings in other nearby comparative communities with greater resources have fallen short. It is a testament to our residents and the unique nature of Milton that we have come so far in just one fiscal year. It is no wonder that CNN/Money Magazine rated Milton as one of the top ten communities to live in the United States.

Retirements and Appointments

Fiscal Year 2008 was also a busy year for retirements and new Appointments with Richard Wells being named Chief of Police, Charles Paris and Paul Nolan being appointed Deputy Chiefs of Police, John (Jack) Grant being named Deputy Chief of the Fire Department and Brian Doherty rising to the rank of Lieutenant, in the Fire Department. Milton sent four (4) cadets to the Police Academy all of whom graduated and were hired as Patrolmen along with Liam Roper who came onto the force from the Boston Housing Authority.

Additional appointments included Traffic Supervisor Cheryl Little, Veterans Agent Stephen Murphy, Joseph Cunningham, Jr to the Historical Commission and Brian Carroll to DPW Working Foreman.

Many volunteers were re-appointed and newly appointed to the increasing number of volunteer committees that serve Milton including the creation of the Alternate Energy Committee, the Wind Study Committee, and the Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee all formed with the aim of finding alternate, more efficient and less expensive ways to fuel and manage our town government.

The following Town employees retired during this fiscal year: John J. Devine, Jr., and John J. Regan, Fire Department; Mary A. Whitney, Health Department and John J. Taylor, Department of Public Works.

We are grateful to each and every one of these employees for their years of hard work and loyalty to our Town. We wish them all good health and much happiness in the years ahead.

Financial Issues/Problem Solving/Efficiencies

Fiscal 2008 was one noted for increasing financial challenge as the very beginnings of what would become a national economic crisis were felt. The Board of Selectmen maintained a steady course in navigating the changing economic currents and continued to find ways to manage unexpected emergencies. Finding a solution to paying for the high medical costs of our fallen Firefighter Tony Pickens, catastrophically injured by a drunk driver while coming to the aid of a motorist, was one such test. Through the use of expert consultants paid for via cost savings and with the extraordinary support of our legislators and Governor Patrick, we were able to reduce these overall costs dramatically. We then had special legislation stewarded through the state legislature and signed by Governor Patrick which funded these extensive medical costs for the next five years and are helping to find a solution to retire Firefighter Pickens with the honor and financial stability that he deserves.

In another effort to protect our town assets and reduce costs to residents, the Board of Selectmen revised a 1953 water sharing agreement with our neighboring town of Canton to increase Canton residents fees for use of Milton water to better reflect actual costs and thereby reduce the cost burden to Milton water ratepayers.

The Department of Public Works was reorganized in fiscal 2008, eliminating two positions and combining responsibilities of the Senior Administrative Clerk and Conservation Commission agent. This reorganization streamlined job responsibilities and saved sufficient funds to allow for the hiring of a Civil Engineer which is anticipated to save the Town several hundred thousand dollars in costly outside consultant fees on Public Works projects. All Public Works office functions were combined and moved to the Town Yard thereby eliminating inefficient travel for DPW employees between Town Hall and the DPW yard while increasing supervisory oversight.

The Police Department Emergency Operating Center was opened creating a space that is now used by many town departments as an aid in training employees while also making Milton a regional center for emergency management coordination. Most of this project was paid for by grants and private donation.

In our continuing effort to safeguard what funds we do receive from residents, the Board worked with Town Treasurer Kevin Sorgi on his goal to implement better cash control systems at Town Hall, creating the “voucher program” to track and secure cash receipts, and instituting a system that allows residents to pay excise tax and real estate taxes on-line thereby speeding receipts and available funds into Town coffers. Deposits of checks are also now made immediately via on-line back connections thereby reducing the need to manually deposit funds at the bank several times each day, further earning interest at a faster rate on Town receipts and reducing the number and fees for lock boxes rentals. Many department heads and town employees have been instrumental in assisting in finding other ways to help us be more efficient and the Board hopes to implement more cost savings ideas. Security generally was upgraded at Town Hall with a new computer passkey security system for the entire building rather than the old reliance on metal keys.

Despite a consensus that Milton must rely on Proposition 2 ½ overrides every few years to bolster our revenues in light of the increasing costs for quality services to residents, concerns about beginning economic turmoil in the world’s stock markets and the lack of an organized override campaign contributed to a decision by Town Meeting in May 2008 to vote to approve only a non-contingent budget for fiscal 2009. Town Meeting did send clear directions to the Board of Selectmen and the Warrant Committee to work jointly towards multi-year planning and to begin work immediately to plan for a possible override for fiscal 2010.

Planning /Development / New Initiatives

The Board of Selectmen issued two new liquor licenses, one for a new restaurant at Milton Landing and a second at 550 Adams Street (the former location of Video to Go). Both restaurants are expected to open in the spring of 2009. Town Meeting in May of 2008 supported an article allowing for a transition from full-serve to self-serve gas stations at the existing gas stations in Milton.

In an effort to find alternate energy options for Milton and to try to stem the rising and erratic costs of fuel, the Board formed a Renewable Alternate Energy Committee and Wind Study Committee to advise members on methods of conservation and alternate energy options, including wind and solar energy capture. These Committees' findings are expected to be reported at the May 2009 Annual Town Meeting. In the meantime, conservation methods including approving the use of more fuel efficient cars for the Police Department and encouraging bike use via better bike lanes and available bike racks around Town have been instituted.

The Board held discussions in fiscal 2008 with town residents and Friends of the Milton Animal Rescue League on the siting of the planned Milton Animal Shelter, the old shelter now situated on Governor Stoughton Trust land being woefully insufficient to serve the Town's needs. Finding that expansion is not possible on the existing site, the Board voted to place the new shelter at the Town Yard. Planned fund-raising is expected to secure all of the private funds necessary to build the new shelter at no cost to the taxpayers.

Discussions surrounding the future of the Governor Stoughton Trust land and the Milton Animal Shelter led to an advisory committee being formed to help advise the Trustees of the Governor Stoughton Fund Trust on the future options for the property, options that would be in keeping with the charge to the Trustees to use the property to support efforts to help the "poor" of Milton.

The Board of Selectmen welcomed several new businesses to Milton in fiscal 2008. The Planning Board and Building Department have worked to approve new development applications in the Central Ave/ Lower Mills sections of Milton at the former Hendries site, 36 Central Avenue and 2 Adams Street, and the respective real estate developers for these sites hope to begin construction in Spring 2009.

Infrastructure

Fiscal Year 2008 saw the conclusion of the School Building Project, giving the citizens of Milton a new high school, middle school, and four (4) elementary schools with direct costs to Milton residents only a fraction of their value thanks to the state reimbursement legislation filed by Senator Brian Joyce and secured by our entire legislative team. The Main Library project also began construction in fiscal 2008 and still remains under budget with completion and grand opening expected in the spring of 2009. Our ability to secure a stable bond rating has helped the Town secure low interim bond premiums for the library restoration and expansion project and the final bonding will take place in early January of 2009.

Other infrastructure improvements in Town continue including MWRA water projects, underground water and sewer upgrades, and traffic calming measures including traffic lights at Unquity /Canton and at Blue Hills Parkway/Brook Road. The implementation of the new GIS system is expected in the fall of 2008 and will be linked to the now updated Town Web site that is expected to be completed in the summer of 2008. It is hoped that the newly formed Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee will report by December 2008 on other ways to better maintain our new and existing Town buildings and the Wind Study Committee will report by Annual Town Meeting 2009 on our options with respect to wind energy to help lower our municipal energy costs.

The Board enacted revised Water and Sewer rate systems in July of 2008 to encourage water conservation by reducing costs to lower volume users and enacting higher fees for large volume water users.

Greening Milton

Among Milton's most valuable assets are our abundant numbers of trees, our gardens, our proximity to the Blue Hills and the Neponset River, and our employees and volunteers who work hard to keep our Town the beautiful, clean space that we have all come to enjoy. Our obligation and responsibility to protect these assets for future generations has also been a priority of the Board of Selectmen. In fiscal year 2008, the switch to more fuel efficient police cars, support of the DPW rain barrel project to recycle and reuse rainwater for watering lawns and gardens, the Town Wide Tree Inventory project, support of the new Tree Farm next to Cunningham and Collicot Schools which engages school children to grow our own replacement street trees, support for the Parks and Recreation Turners Pond Accessibility project and support of the Sustainable Milton Solar Challenge which earned the Town free solar arrays and software to monitor solar energy gains within the science curriculum of our public schools, are all examples of the Board of Selectmen's commitment to preserve our local environment and to "Green" Milton .

Central Administration

The focus of our Central Administration has been to bolster efficiencies, reduce waste, preserve and stretch every tax dollar and retain or improve the quality of life for our residents. Fiscal 2008 saw the expansion of the Senior Tax Work off program which allows senior residents to contribute life-learned skills to Town departments in exchange for reducing the participants' property tax.

By far the biggest challenge we have in terms of cost savings has continued to be in regard to employee health insurance costs. We remain committed to funding good quality health care for all Town employees and feel strongly that we can do so for lower costs than what we pay now per employee. We will continue to strive to achieve these equally important goals of quality health care and lower operational costs in the next fiscal year.

Thank you's

Thank you to Governor Patrick for his leadership and help this fiscal year, particularly by signing legislation to help us manage our firefighter medical bills. Thank you to all of our Legislative team, Congressman Stephen F. Lynch, Senator Brian A. Joyce, Representative Walter F. Timilty, Representative Linda Dorcena Forry, and Representative Angelo M. Scaccia for all of their work on our behalf. Thank you to all of the many volunteers who make Milton the strong community that it remains. Thank you to all who have contributed their time, talents and treasure to our community in this and all fiscal years.

In closing, we have difficult and numerous challenges ahead, but the Board of Selectmen remains committed to working with and for the residents of Milton to exceed your expectations without exceeding our budget. We ask for your continued participation in these efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn A. Fagan, Chair
John Michael Shields, Secretary
Marion V. McEttrick

