

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Year 2003 was busy and presented a challenge to the Town of Hampden. In January, the State announced a 10% reduction in local funding for the last half of fiscal 2003. As a result, the Board of Selectmen asked each department, with the exception of the HWRSD, to reduce spending and turn 1% of its budget back into the General Fund. We received outstanding cooperation and completed the fiscal year without having to ask voters for more in local tax dollars to complete FY2003.

The Town celebrated its 125th birthday in March. The Historical Society led festivities at the Town House. Local and state representatives were present. Congressman Richard Neal gave the keynote address and more than two hundred citizens attended the gathering.

In May, a general override election for the FY2004 budget failed. Money was taken by 2/3 vote from the Stabilization Fund, and still some departments' total dollars were cut by as much as 28%.

In June, the bid for the renovation and addition of the Green Meadows School was awarded to Fontaine Bros. Inc. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 18th and work is progressing with an anticipated completion date of December 2004. At the Annual Town Meeting, land abutting the school was secured from William Buereau to comply with state requirements for public water supply. Our thanks to the School Building Committee, chaired by Rick Moriarty, for diligent oversight on this (*9.9 million dollar*) project.

Also in June, the Town of Hampden took title to 166 acres of land known as Minnechaug Mountain. Through the efforts of the Hampden Land Project, Inc. the land was purchased from Robert Labodycz and given to the Town. The town will be contributing \$100,000 over five years, from funds voted from the Community Preservation Act account. The Town's share represents approximately 18% of the total purchase price. Hampden Land Project is a private, non-profit organization made up of volunteers.

The Board adopted and implemented The Personnel Policy Handbook revised by the Personnel Committee. A permanent committee has been appointed and procedures for non-bargained employees of the Town will be reviewed by this group.

The Selectmen have changed their schedule to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. We continue to hold the period from 7 to 7:30 PM on our meeting nights available for residents who wish to approach the Board, without an appointment. We welcome your questions and concerns.

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We thank the volunteer members of the numerous boards and committees for hundreds of hours of service to the Town. We are always in need of motivated people to serve in appointed positions. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please contact the Selectmen's office at 566-2151.

Finally, the Annual Town Meeting is held on the last Monday of April every year and the Town Election, the first Monday of May. Special Town Meetings are scheduled throughout the year, with almost always one in October to finalize the budget before the fiscal year's tax rate is set. The Board advertises any special meetings as they approach. We strongly urge all citizens to take part in the political process by attending and voting at Town Meetings and Town Elections. Often, we feel inadequate to control state or national level policies, but at the local level, we actually have a one person/one vote voice in decisions and elections.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane E. Mosier, Chairman

Mark R. Barba
James D. Smith