

## TOWN HALL MONTHLY: November

FEMA, code enforcement and starting the 2024 budget were foremost in Town business during October.

We were notified of reimbursement for 2021 flood repairs made to the Charlestown Road in the amount of \$534,888. This will reduce our loan balance to approximately \$1,500,000. Town Treasurer, Melinda Loiselle, has been corresponding with our bank. Because we are just beginning to receive reimbursements, Mascoma has offered to extend our loan for which we are grateful. The Town has 9 more 2021 flood projects still under FEMA review. Reimbursement for those projects will cover the balance of the loan and replenish Town funds which were used for flood repairs. Efforts made by our State Rep, Judy Aron, and the Selectmen, for financial relief from the State Fiscal Committee, were denied.

A Recovery Scoping Meeting to begin assessment of damages from the 2023 flood has just been scheduled by FEMA. This will follow the same process of site location and costs documentation that we have experienced since 2021. Fortunately, we will have most of the same State and federal staffers working with us. They say their familiarity with Acworth from 2021 should make the process faster. By November 1 we are expecting State officials to make a site visit to Bowers Brook in South Acworth Village to discuss damages there. Watch Town boards and the website for more information.

As we've explained, the Forest Road Bridge replacement is now separate from the FEMA process because the Town has been accepted into the State Bridge Program. Our assigned State project manager has met with us and toured the site. Jennifer Bland is working with our project manager on a request for engineering which will be distributed to State vetted engineering firms. We hope to have an engineer in place before year end. Charlotte and Jennifer will share the responsibilities of the Town's point of contact and will have completed a required training for that by November.

During October, Selectmen were forced to engage Town Counsel for assistance with a code enforcement issue involving unpermitted site development. Involving counsel is expensive and was resorted to only after local efforts failed. The Town's objective in these matters is to work with property owners to bring the situation into compliance with Town regulations. Often noncompliance is a result of a property owner not knowing the regulations. We are working at making our regulations and processes available on the Town website. A second compliance action which took place during October was initiated by State authorities and involved agricultural animal protection. State Police Troop C, which the Town relies on for law enforcement, directed the action with officials from the Department of Agriculture. The Town's Health and Code Enforcement officers were also required to be present.

The Planning Board has also been called to address compliance issues. This has come up in both Planning Board permitting and in subdivision oversight. While unusual, these matters can also require Town Counsel consultation. Whether it involves Town or State regulations, compliance continues to consume more of the time of Town officials, board members and employees. A simple and helpful alternative could be for prospective, new or established owners to check with our Town office before starting a project.

The State has not set our fall tax rate yet and we cannot print bills until they do. It's important to remember that the tax rate is a combination of School District costs, State Education costs, and County costs on top of Town costs. Typically, Town costs come to about a third of the total tax rate.

Thanks to all of you for all you do, Kathi