

## **2018 REPORT OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

As is the custom, it is with great pleasure that, as chair of the Board of Selectmen (Board), I present our State of the Town Report to the residents of Millis.

There were a great many positive developments in Town government over the past year and a half, and I am confident that the hard work and dedication by my colleagues, Jim McCaffrey and Loring Barnes, and myself, as well as all the volunteers, will continue to make Millis a healthy and desirable place in which to live and, perhaps, raise your family -- as those before us have successfully done.

### **Fire Department**

The town continued its multi-year investment of ALS (Advanced Life Support) service with the appointment of an additional full-time paramedic, thereby achieving the service level required to be licensed. I am honored to report that the Fire Department was formally ALS Certified on November 18, 2018. The department has been running ALS since that time, and as assured by Chief Rick Barrett, the ambulance receipts have increased tremendously. The Board congratulates Chief Rick and his staff on their hard work in achieving this major accomplishment – that few towns possess. I would like to add that the Board receives many notes and calls of appreciation from Millis residents and nonresidents commending the services, professionalism, and compassionate care rendered by our fire department staff.

Let me state here that these increased ambulance receipts have allowed the Board to recommend at Town Meeting that a much needed part-time administrative assistant be hired so that the Chief does not have to tend to secretarial duties, and can spend his time on Chief duties. Thanks Chief Rick for tending to these important responsibilities for the past several years until funds were available.

### **Clyde F. Brown School Project**

“On time and under budget,” is what residents heard throughout 2018 and up to the present. The school is scheduled to open for the 2019-2020 school year. Many thanks to the Elementary School Building Committee for their diligence in successfully guiding the largest capital project in the history of Millis.

### **Council on Aging**

Along with the student population, the Board of Selectmen takes seriously our responsibility to our senior citizens. To that end, my colleagues and I have recommended that Town Meeting approve funds for a feasibility study to get the ball rolling regarding the fate of the senior center located in this building. This study will allow not only senior citizens but all residents to comment on the needs of our growing senior population, both personally and as to an area where this important sector of our population can meet and enjoy fellowship.

### **Tri-Board Meetings**

The School Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Selectmen have been meeting jointly to discuss how to better work together in making improvements to the Town's financial processes, its policies and procedures, and opening better lines of communication within all areas of government. Those meetings and that important work will continue into 2019 and beyond. For the first time, sharing resources between the school and municipal staff and purchases will prove economically beneficial, giving Millis the biggest bang for her buck.

### **Retail/Cultivation Marijuana Facilities**

After failing at the May 2018 Town Meeting, the Fall Town Meeting voted to amend or adopt zoning by-laws regarding retail marijuana establishments, including the imposition of a 3% sales tax on marijuana and marijuana products sold in town. At recent Board meetings, after many hours of negotiation, including countless hours of research by town counsel, the Board signed two Host Community Agreements, one with CommCan for retail marijuana sales, the medical marijuana sales host agreement approved last year; and one between Millis and 617 Therapeutic Health Center.

Regarding 617 Therapeutic Health Center, my colleagues and I would like to thank all those involved in the preparation and passage of the zoning by-laws that allows 617 to operate its marijuana cultivating establishment. The payment schedule is outlined in the Agreement and town counsel, after reviewing the business plan of 617, stated that revenues could be from \$600,000 to \$900,000 per year. In addition, the agreement provides for review of odor control, Certified Public Accountant certification of revenue, default if payments not received, security and diversion prevention and safety, local hiring preference, manager approval, and full dismantling of operations following closure.

This is but step one for 617. Several approvals are also required on the State and Town level.

This is by far the largest revenue-generating business in the history of Millis and my colleagues and I would like to thank everyone involved in this monumental achievement. Thank you, Mr. Guzinski.

### **Capital Planning Committee (CPC)**

The May 2018 Town Meeting approved the creation of a Capital Planning Committee. The CPC has enthusiastically moved forward with their charge of developing a comprehensive Capital Plan to present to the Town. The CPC is charged with working with all Department Heads and Committees to develop a list of capital improvements proposed to be undertaken during the next five years and beyond which shall contain cost estimates, methods of financing, how facilities are to be maintained and their estimated costs of operating, and recommended priorities. The Board would like to thank the members of this new committee for all the work they have done to move this vital process forward.

### **Stormwater Management**

Program development for Stormwater Management is an ongoing effort. Less than one percent (1%) of stormwater utility bills have been appealed, which is mainly the result of Town Officials being able to provide quality customer service, clear answers to questions, and the commitment of Town staff to resolve issues to the satisfaction of Town residents. The Board and staff will continue to work with residents and property owners to make sure the program is responsive to their needs and contributes to the health, safety, and quality of life in Millis. The Board recognizes that the Stormwater Utility is a necessary means of meeting federal and state environmental requirements and providing the important functions to improve and properly maintain the vital infrastructure of Millis. Projects as a result of the stormwater enterprise fund are well underway. Engineering designs are being finalized for several culvert repairs. And the happy news? A portion of the stormwater enterprise funds can be used to repair the crumbling and pot-holed roads caused by poor drainage.

### **DPW Facility**

Since 2012, the town has been applying very expensive bandages to the DPW garage. The Permanent Building Committee has unanimously recommended, and my colleagues and I unanimously concur, and we now recommend that Town Meeting support the construction and renovation of a DPW facility – not with an override but through borrowing. Millis has millions of dollars in DPW vehicles and equipment, and state and federal regulations require these vehicles be properly

housed and maintained. The DPW staff has been too long with shoddy, actually pathetic accommodations, the likes of which we would never allow our police and fire staff to work in. It is not “too soon” to begin work on this project.

### **Appointment of DPW Director**

In 2018 the Board approved the Town Administrator’s recommendation and appointed James McKay, the long-time Deputy Director of the Department of Public Works, as the town’s Director of that Department. The Board agreed with the Town Administrator that Jim’s twelve years of dedicated public service as the town’s Deputy Director was solid evidence that he was eminently qualified to assume this role.

### **Appointment of New Finance Director**

In September, after a long search process, the Board announced the appointment of a new Finance Director for the Town of Millis. Carol Johnston began work with the Town this past Fall as our new Finance Director. Carol brings with her over 30 years of financial management experience from the private/non-profit sectors and we are thrilled with her performance in her new role. We are truly fortunate to have an individual with such skill, knowledge, education, and enthusiasm working for the Town in this important role.

### **Financial Management Structure**

Last year, the Board decided to conduct a study/review of the financial management structure of the Town. As a result of the study’s recommendations, the Board and the School Committee discussed the integration of the Municipal and School Finance Functions. The result of these discussions was the establishment of a consolidated more efficient and effective financial management structure under the supervision of the Finance Director. The new financial management structure is working well. The system will further improve once the Town implements a new (state grant funded) financial software program for the school finances which will streamline all financial systems town-wide. The bottom line of all this jargon is the Board is confident money will be saved sharing school and municipal resources.

### **Recognition and Thanks**

We’d like to recognize and thank all the appointed and elected town officials and employees (too many to mention) who have contributed to the success of the Town

this past year. Your hard work and caring for this beautiful community is truly appreciated.

We would like to take a moment for a special thanks to Karen Bouret, our Operations Support Manager, and Maureen Canesi, our Department Assistant. These two individuals are critical to the effective administration of the Board of Selectmen's office, and we thank them for their dedication over the past year.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers in our community who step forward to donate their time, energy, and talents for the betterment of Millis. That includes all those who populate our various appointed committees.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine MacInnes

Chair, Board of Selectmen