

## **Town Manager's Report**

Taxpayers will be receiving a notice shortly, or have already received a notice about the Town's intent to increase assessed values by 20%. Conway, NH has recently undergone a revaluation that has many people up in arms and as a result I have heard concerns from Fryeburg residents that we are following suit. We are not doing a town-wide reval. What we are doing is making a town-wide adjustment to assessed values to raise our certified ratio. Our certified ratio has fallen to 66% and by completing across the board increases, the result will be that our assessments are more reflective of actual market values. Municipalities are required by 36 MRS Section 327 to assess at no less than 70% of just value for property tax purposes.

We are also beginning a process of inspecting properties to ensure accuracy in assessment; this is also required by statute. Per 36 MRS Section 328, assessors are required to physically inspect each taxable account every 4 years.

Simply put, the steps we are taking relative to assessments is to ensure compliance with state statutes. It can be difficult to explain to residents that increasing the assessed values is necessary and in-fact beneficial to residents. There are numerous negative ramifications to having such a low certified ratio. It impacts revenue sharing, road assistance, and numerous other state reimbursements that help offset the tax burden to residents.

Unfortunately, the Town is not immune from the rising costs of goods and services and we need to plan and budget accordingly so that we can operate and provide essential services to the residents. However, there is always an effort to be cognizant of spending to keep taxes low. The Select Board, Budget Committee and myself are all residents who pay taxes and we were fortunate to have 3 years of mil rate decreases prior to this tax year.

As you all may know, the Town of Fryeburg is in the planning stages of the construction a new Municipal Complex. The complex will house the Town Office, Fire Department and Police Department, and will be located on property that abuts the Public Works Garage and the Recreation Community Center. This will create a centralized location for the majority of the town's vital functions.

The efforts to revise our assessed values is entirely separate of the effort to build this much-needed municipal complex. There is a definitive need for new facilities for our departments to operate from. The Town residents voted to purchase land intended for the municipal complex and to expend funds to plan for the building design. We are currently following that directive and are proceeding with plans.

There was a recent public hearing with about 35 people in attendance and all seemed to agree that there is a need for a complex. Not one person stood up and said that we don't need new facilities. There was some back and forth about specifics of the building design, which the building committee and architects will consider.

We are pursuing grants and donations to help offset the construction costs. We are also aggressively investing funds, with the goal of using the interest to make bond payments. The Town currently has zero debt and a healthy credit reserve fund. With all of that being said, it is likely unrealistic to say that the construction of the complex won't result in increased taxes. It will be up to the taxpayers to decide if they feel that it is worth it to them.

To reiterate, these are entirely separate issues. The Town is most certainly not raising assessed values to pay for a new complex. Please reach out if there are further questions or concerns and I will gladly to my best to address those.

Respectfully,  
Katie Haley