

# **Report from the Chairman on the Past Year**

*The mission of the Board of Selectmen is to serve the community by providing clear, concise goals and policies that ensure quality in the delivery of Town Services, long-term planning and improved efficiencies in operating Town government.*

This past year...

Following the 2008 annual town meeting and town elections, the Board convened for the coming session, welcoming former chair of the finance committee Rick Atherton to the Board. Michael Kopko and Patty Roggeveen were elected Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Selectmen, respectively. Acting as the County Commission, Brian Chadwick was elected Chair of the County, and Rick Atherton Vice-Chair.

In preparation for establishing goals and objectives for the coming year, the administrative staff recommended a new approach to that process, which the Board adopted. It was determined that the Board would adopt fewer specific goals and endeavor to make substantial progress and completion of the objectives outlined pursuant to those goals. Another change was to clearly delineate the responsibilities of the Board and the administration by defining objectives as Policy Priorities and Management Priorities. In this way, the Board could focus on its responsibility to develop and oversee broader policies to guide the work of the Town, and the administration could set clear management priorities to carry these policies out. This approach kept us on task in prioritizing our work.

It should be noted that two issues have become overarching priorities that informed a large part of our work in the past year. One is the health and management of the Town's finances. The other is examining and improving the way that the Town government functions. These priorities are reflected in the goals and objectives outlined below.

Our first goal was to **Improve Administrative Management**.

First objective was to develop a Board Policy Manual. This process is ongoing. As the Board acts, policies are compiled into a manual for easy reference and access. The second objective was to plan for continued employee professional development. To this end, a number of key staff were enrolled in and completed training through Suffolk University. Staff and selectmen continue to do professional development to enhance skills and reach accreditation. Our third objective was to work toward reorganizing the Department of Public Works. The Town commissioned a study and the consultant's report has been issued. Recommendations are being considered, and the next step will be to develop and execute an implementation plan based on these recommendations. These changes will result in significant efficiencies in the department and better delivery of services. The Town also commissioned a reorganization study of the Finance Department. The report contained 36 recommendations that are being implemented in reorganizing and fully staffing the department. These changes will also result in significant improvement in the department.

The Board continues to support the Town Manager's efforts to improve the way we "do our work", and transition to a level of professional management necessary to run as complex and expensive an institution as the Town of Nantucket in the twenty-first century.

Our second goal is to **Improve Fiscal Management.**

The primary objective under this goal was to bring our accounting and audits current. The Town's audits had gotten significantly behind, and as a result, the Finance department needed to complete four years of past audits. Working closely with the Audit Committee, the Town Manager and Finance department made this project their first priority. As of this writing, the final overdue audit from 2008 has had its final paperwork submitted to the auditor. It is anticipated that audits will be current well before the end of this fiscal year. It should be noted that this work was done simultaneously with new protocols and practices being implemented for FY 2009, and the implementation of the reorganization of the Finance Department. The past year has seen a very significant turnaround in the way that the Town manages its finances.

The Ad Hoc Budget Committee continues to meet. The committee, which consists of the chair and vice chair of the Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committee, as well as administrative staff from the Town and Schools, is an important part of the budget planning process. The parties in the budgeting process have met earlier and more often this year, necessary to working together in addressing the fiscal challenges that are facing municipalities across the state and the country.

Our third goal was to **Develop an Overall Waste Management Plan (Wastewater & Solid Waste.)**

On the wastewater side, the Nantucket Sewer Act was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor in December. The Act takes effect at the beginning of FY10, and provides for greater local control over our wastewater system. It will also provide a range of options for funding the implementation of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP). Our hard work on wastewater issues will put us in good stead as the state begins to implement assistance to cities and towns in financing these expensive projects. The Board has prioritized the next phases of the Plan. An implementation workgroup will be tasked in the coming weeks to have the elements of the Sewer Act in place for the beginning of the next fiscal year.

On solid waste, after a number of difficult years in our relationship with our landfill contractor, the Board determined to create a working relationship with the contractor, seeking to create an equitable contractual relationship while controlling costs to the Town and the taxpayers. The Board engaged an expert in municipal solid waste management and special legal counsel with expertise in solid waste issues. In the fall, the Board tasked a workgroup to open a channel and begin talks with our contractor. These talks have led to a point where the parties can now negotiate in good faith, and the Board expects that the result will be an equitable management of the contract and significant cost savings to the taxpayers.

Our fourth goal was **Enhance the Quality of Life**.

Many objectives were identified and addressed under this goal. One Big Beach agreements were completed giving public access to South Shore beaches. The Harbor Plan Implementation Committee has issued its draft report, and state approval of our harbors plan is imminent. This will give the Town strong local regulatory control over the protection and development of Nantucket and Madaket harbors. The Board reviewed the planning Board's 4181-D master plan, reviewed many traffic-related plans and developed a protocol to be sure that Planning Board requirements for improvements to public roads and ways come to the Board for approval. We adopted harbor regulations prohibiting large vessels from anchoring in the environmentally sensitive up-harbor area. We are working with a consultant to develop a request for proposals for the development of affordable housing at 2 Fairgrounds Road.

The Board continues to appoint workgroups and advisory committees to involve citizens in important work developing information and recommendations for the Board. The Energy Committee updated its mission statement to include the exploration of alternative energy on Nantucket. They created a program for students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute came to the Island and develop feasibility information on the development of municipal wind power projects o the island. These projects are moving along, thanks to the good work of that committee. Other committees of citizens working to get things done include the Harbor Plan Implementation Committee, Citizens' Committee on the Public Safety Facility, Downtown Revitalization Committee, Streets and Sidewalks Committee, Bulk Fuel Study Committee, etc. These committees are providing valuable service to the Town using a great resource, the knowledge, experience and commitment of our citizens.

The Board also continues to work in its regulatory capacity. We are currently developing guidelines on consequences for liquor license violations as the Local Licensing Authority. The Board reviews and approves liquor licenses, as well as victuallers' and entertainment licenses. We have also reviewed and updated the taxi regulations, as the board acts as Police and Fire Commissioners. In our capacity as the Board of Health, we are proposing to establish a separate Board of Health, composed partially of health and environmental professionals, to more effectively regulate those issues. The Board has appointed a blue-ribbon commission to recommend a comprehensive approach to controlling tick-borne diseases. In addition to being the Licensing Authority, Police and Fire Commission and Board of Health, the Board of Selectmen also serves as Sewer Commission/Public Works Commission, Regional Transit Authority and County Commission.

This has been a challenging and active year for the Board of Selectmen. With the focused and diligent work of the Town Manager and her staff, as well as analysis and recommendations from experts, we have made significant progress in developing a new level of professionalism in the administration and a more responsible approach to handling the Town's finances. More importantly, I believe that we have started to make fundamental changes that will make the future management of the Town more responsive, efficient and worthy of the taxpayers' trust.