**TA Update**

*October 29, 2018*

**Departments**

Although tax bills went out late—Monday, October 22—we received Department of Revenue approval for the proposed tax rate of $18.65. Our maximum allowable levy is $5,075, 837, with an FY19 levy of $4,916,079.86, leaving us with an excess levy capacity of $159,757.14. This is excellent news, and we should be sure to proceed moderately so as to maintain a healthy excess levy capacity.

The Finance Committee has approved two transfers of funds from the reserve fund, one for the Town match for a FEMA grant to renew our hazard mitigation plan, and one to erase a deficit in the Mark Boice Germain Fund, which we had been using to assist in mowing the cemeteries.

As you will recall, I have sent an e-mail to all department heads asking for their responses to a way to get more people involved in Town work, both as volunteers and as potential staff. Next fall, I’d like to offer Conway residents a formal opportunity to learn about local government, a “Citizens’ Academy” in which each department or board head (or a combination) would meet with residents. This would go for about eight to ten weeks, one meeting per week. Those who completed the program would get a certificate. This has been very successful in other communities, and I look forward to seeing how it works here.

I had a chance to test the water at the Grammar School and found it odorless, though with a very slight taste different from bottled water. I’ve talked with Bob Lesko and we’d like to sit down with Mass Tank inspection and express our concerns about the cost of the bottled water, our belief that their proprietary cleaner leached through the liner, and our consequent lack of faith that the liner has maintained its integrity. Monthly tests are on-going, and the school would like non-detectable toxin residue to assure parents of excellent water quality. Regardless of whether results are zero before the end of the year, we’re planning to request Mass Tank to re-line it over the holiday break, as we have no confidence the liner is intact, if unevaporated cleaning solvents leached through it (which I believe is the most likely scenario).

I attended a meeting with FEMA to learn about the hazard mitigation grant to renew our plan, which qualifies us for FEMA hazard mitigation funding; apparently services for implementing the planning section must be procured under federal regulations, which differ from state regulations, though if we take the appropriate steps, we should be able to contract with the FRCOG, as planned.

I have used other towns’ documents freely for many years and am glad I was able to share an excellent example from Conway. A number of towns are interested in re-payment plans for employees who receive training, and I sent out the agreement we came up with for our Ambulance service EMT training to several towns, spreading the good name of Conway throughout the Commonwealth.

MMA staff gave a short presentation on an FCC rulemaking regarding cable franchise fees and a possible substantial reduction in PEG access money. Bob Armstrong was also there, and we’ve gotten some preliminary information from MMA we’d like to bring to the next Select Board meeting.