

Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham Newsletter

Issue #1, January 2004

Once again we had an informative meeting on November 20, 2003 at the High School auditorium. Our three team leaders each delivered an update on the happenings of their areas of responsibility. One of the reporters that attended call me to compliment our group on the quality of the questions that were asked. High praise indeed. Our membership is over 100 and climbing steadily. It was discussed that we now have ended Phase I, that of establishing ourselves and completing the basics. We seem to have a positive relationship with the press. Our meetings and issues are being covered objectively. We are now entering Phase II. This will be a more proactive phase. We will begin to ask more questions of our town leaders and question some decisions that we may disagree with. We have learned that Selectman Smith of Hamden is attending the teachers contract negotiation. Perhaps our selectmen will take a hint. Here is a report from our team leaders:

Royce Layman: School Committee Team Leader.

Committee has begun budget work for the new year and will be reviewing their first budget draft at their next meeting on January 13, 2004. Budget development will take place until late spring when the final budget will be presented to the town meeting. According to school officials, drastic shortages are not being heard from the state thus far this fiscal year. Local committees have met together this past fall to mutually discuss budget concerns and directions. And, I understand local officials are hoping to hold the line on spending increases and not seek an override this year. Some areas that may result in added costs are increased class sizes, in several grade levels, spiraling health insurance costs, and certain maintenance issues. Another area of major budgetary impact is the consideration of a total renovation and retrofitting of the High School. For the most part this year, I believe the School Department is trying to work within the present limitations and live within the monies available.

Patrick Mc Comb: Selectmen Meeting Team Leader.

The CCW Selectman's team has tried to cover as many meetings as possible. Our New Years resolution is to cover 100% in 2004. The team members Chuck Marsman, Greg Chaconas and Ted Sowa, have done a great job. In January we are adding a new member, Jean Courtney, a woman with impeccable credentials. The major matters before the Board have been trash bag fees, Personnel Board pay recommendations and plowing cemeteries. As you are painfully aware, the trash fees were increased by a massive percentage on a 2-0 vote by the board. The Personnel pay recommendations seem heavily favored. This despite the fact that the board acknowledges that no funds exist to fund it. Also, there was an attempt to include our independently elected Town Clerk in the proposal. Fortunately that seems to have failed. The plowing issue on its face seems reasonable. But, there are no funds to pay for it, or the resulting damage done by the plows to the headstones. Anyone interested in joining our team, feel free to contact me or Bob Page.

John Lovejoy: Finance & Capital Planning Committee Team Leader.

The Finance Committee has met twice this fall. Marcia Zimmer was named chairman. They discussed the towns financial situation and prospects. This years letter to town departments was sent by the Town Accountant instead of the Town Administrator for FY 2005 (July 1 2004 to June 30, 2005), seeking budget recommendations. She cautioned all not to propose a wish list. Various Fin Com members were assigned to watch over specific departmental budgets and to set timetables and targets The Fin Com officially begins its budget review process on Wednesday,

Jan. 7 at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall Meeting Room 2. Meetings usually lasts about 2 hours. A complete proposed budget, department by department, line by line, is available at each Fin Com meeting. During the work week a complete budget is available from the Accounting Office. The Fin Com liaisons will answer your questions. By appointment town department heads will answer questions. The Fin Com solicits public input and questions at the beginning of it's meetings. Fin Com members easily admit they do not know everything however they can and usually do promptly come up with factual answers. If you are interested the Fin Com areas of responsibility, this list will is available on the tables at the auditorium entrance. Capital Budget Committee There were 2 fall meetings. 1 progress report & 1 planning report. The next Capital Budget Committee will meet Tuesday, January 20 at Soule Road School.

One of our charter members, is completing some research and study on the use of Enterprise funds. I've seen some of what he is working on and we will be bringing forward the information at our January meeting. It's going to be pretty eye opening. Be sure to come and learn what he has discovered.

As all you members of Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham know by now you have received your membership cards with this newsletter. I know that it has taken a while but there have been a lot of other things we had to get done first. We will be sending out a membership card to each new member as they join us. Thanks for your patience. Also, in the future, monthly newsletters will be postal mailed to members who have no email address. Members that have email addresses will get your newsletter via the Internet. Saves money don't you know. If you choose, print it out and pass it around.

We are looking into establishing a web or BLOG site for our groups use. If it works out it will serve as a library of sent and received letters, past newsletters, documents that may of interest to you, links to other town sites, an open forum and more. The only problem is you will need computer to get into it. It is not intended to replace our newsletter.

Did anyone notice that there was a front page article on Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham in the Smoke Signal, The Minnechaug H.S. newspaper? It seemed to make us look a little too negative, in my opinion. Wished they had included our Statement of Principles that shows what we really stand for. Oh well, one step at a time, It was in the December issue that came out Friday the December 19th. The good news is that the word about us is getting around.

This is our first newsletter and we will be learning as we go along. Our plan is to first recap important parts of the previous meeting. We will also be telling you about various research projects, interesting happenings, sometimes a little gossip, important things we have learned, and listing a notice of various town meetings that you may choose to attend. We need your input and comments as to how we can make this a more helpful tool for us all. Just use our email address, write a note or give us a call. It is our intent to get the newsletter in you hands about 10 days in advance of each of our meetings.

Let me take this time to thank all of you members who generously made contributions to our organization. Our checking account is at CHARTER ONE BANK on Main Street. There are no services charges or charges for checks. Information regarding that account and how that money is being used is available to all members at any time. What little that has been spent to date has been for minor office supplies and postage.

We want to alert you that we were invited to submit a contributing article to the Metro East Plus magazine that appears every Wednesday in the Republican newspaper. The CC of W article will

appear in the December 31st issue on page 2. It's about a half a page. Give it a read and let us know your suggestions and comments.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, January 6, 2004 at 7:30 PM again at the Minnechaug Regional High School. Please come.

Important things are going on.
You need to come to the meetings to be kept up to date.

Other Important Upcoming Town Meetings

Selectmen Meetings

Mondays

December 29th, January 5th, 12th & 20th 2004, 7:00 PM Town Hall

Finance Committee

Wednesdays

January 7th , 14th , 21st , 28th 2004, 7: PM Town Hall

School Committee

Tuesdays

January 13, 2004, Thornton Burgess School

January 27, 2004, Minnechaug Regional High School

Happy Holidays to All!

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