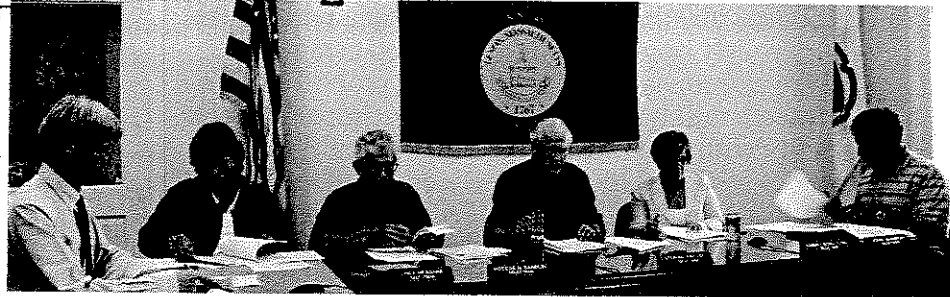


NEW FACES AND OLD CHALLENGES



The membership has changed, but the challenges remain the same this year for the Lenox Board of Selectmen.

The chairman for the year is Stephen Pavlosky, who is completing his first three-year term on the board.

Joining him are John McNinch, a lifelong Lenox resident serving in his first elected office, and Kim Reopell Flynn, who filled an uncompleted term in 2003 and was elected to a full term at the May Town Meeting.

Remaining on the board are Roscoe Sandlin and Linda Messana.

Pavlosky sees three major issues before the board this year.

1. Maintaining the current level of services with fixed costs going up. The Town Board controls only 38 percent of the budget, with the School Committee controlling the rest.

2. The issue raised by GE in its plan to dredge the polluted Housatonic in Lenox is a major challenge for the town, which calls for united resident opposition. (See article on next page.)

3. A master plan for economic and business development is needed.

Pavlosky says Lenox should be known, not only for cultural attractions, such as Shakespeare & Company and Tanglewood, but also as a health and wellness community. Kripalu, Canyon Ranch, Cranwell and Aspinwell need to join in making Lenox a year-around center for business, industry and culture.

The Budget Crunch

Town Manager Gregory Federspiel, in his "State of the Town" address at the Annual Town Meeting, gave an overview of the expanding gap with expenses outgrowing new revenue.

With the coming new fiscal year, Lenox will be at its levy limit for the first time. That means that the town cannot raise taxes more than 2 ½% without going to the voters for an override vote.

"Thus, with no override approval and assuming that new construction continues to remain low for the foreseeable future, increases in expenses will be greater than our new income," Federspiel said. "The town is required to have a balanced budget, forcing reductions in costs. With rising energy expenses, higher insurance premiums and modest pay raises for staff along with a backlog of needed capital improvements and repairs, and unfunded post retirement benefit obligations, finding reductions is not easy. New ways of delivering services or reducing the level of services will have to be pursued."

Looking ahead a few years only exacerbates the town's problems, he added. The funding gap, which starts out at roughly \$100,000, quickly doubles in size in a couple of years and more than doubles again when capital repairs are factored in.

"We are facing some very challenging times," Federspiel said. "We are certainly not alone, as other communities and the state are facing even larger deficits. As fiscal conditions worsen we will have to start looking beyond our town borders at possible regional solutions to our service needs."

GE WANTS TO CREATE A NEW WASTE SITE

The Board of Selectmen has unanimously opposed a proposal by GE to dredge the polluted Housatonic in Lenoxdale and create a hazardous landfill in Lenox.

After joining the board of Health in sponsoring an informational meeting, the Selectmen sent a letter to the EPA vigorously opposing GE's proposed cleanup.

"We are extremely concerned that the proposed measures put forth will have a major negative impact on our community with too little gain in terms of truly cleaning up the PCB's in the Housatonic River and floodplain," the Board said in its letter signed by Stephen Pavlosky, Chairman, and Roscoe Sandlin, Clerk

"We find it unacceptable that there could be a new, permanent hazardous waste landfill constructed in our community. We wish to state in very clear terms that such a facility will be vigorously opposed. It makes no sense to us to purposely construct a new hazardous waste site when there are plenty of existing sites elsewhere.

"The detrimental impacts on Lenox residential neighborhoods that result from the current clean-up scenarios are also not acceptable. The access to the river and floodplain in Lenox is either from New Lenox Road or

through the hamlet of Lenox Dale. Property values, which comprise a major part of a citizen's assets, will plummet and the ability to sell property in these areas will disappear with the prospect of years of living within a major 'construction zone.' The fact that these concerns are not considered as part of the decision process that EPA and GE go through in determining the clean up strategy is particularly bothersome.

"We also want to voice our concerns about the potential impacts on our local infrastructure. The amount of truck traffic alone contemplated in the GE proposal would wreak havoc on our local roads. We need guarantees that any damage caused to our infrastructure by the clean-up efforts will be repaired by the contractors.

"The proposed corrective measures are all based on older techniques – dredging or covering – and fail to take advantage of innovative techniques that have been or will be developed. It will take many years to clean up the river. A mechanism must be put into place to allow for experimentation and alternative corrective measures to be utilized if and when they become available."

WHAT ELSE IS NEW IN OUR TOWN?

PUBLIC WORKS

Jeff Vincent, supervisor of Public Works, reported that cost and energy saving measures in his department are helping to combat global warming and to working within the current budget.

Despite increases in all costs, including a 50 percent increase in the price of blacktop, petroleum use is being cut by using biodiesel fuel to power equipment, he said.

The department received two grants last year, which contributed to electricity and heating savings. One paid for replacement of truck garage lighting, resulting in improved working conditions and lower energy bills. Another enabled replacement of the garage heating system with infrared ceiling light. Western Massachusetts Electric Co. paid for replacement of motors in waste water operations.

Beth Carroll, is the new department office manager, succeeding Angela Cook, the new town accountant.

SCHOOL CONSERVATION

The conversion of boilers from oil to natural gas has brought the schools "a huge savings" of about \$10,000 this year, Superintendent Marianne Young reported. A new plan is being developed for more solar panels.

Energy audits have brought recommendations, for improved lighting in the elementary school gym and installation of occupancy sensors in some classrooms, In-

stallation of interior storm windows in the Middle and High Schools is being recommended as a cost-efficient way to conserve energy.

"We didn't have to cut any programs," she said, "but we may not have enough money for new text books. The foreign language teachers wanted new text books but they will have to use the ones they have until we can budget for them."

GREEN DAY

The Living Green Fair at the high school on May 3 was such a success that the Lenox Environmental Committee has already started planning for an even larger program for next year.

More than 300 people attended to visit the booths of 40 vendors and visit 12 workshops offering new ideas for combatting global warming. An effort will be made to incorporate this year's Chamber of Commerce Health Exposition into one event in 2009.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Cathie May has retired for the second time. After retiring from her leadership of Elder Services in Pittsfield, she became the Community Center's Senior Services Coordinator. Now she has retired again.

Sue Holmes will fill Cathie's role in addition to continuing as the Center's Outreach Director.