

## 2003 ANNUAL REPORT TOWN MANAGER

The nation's stagnant economy significantly impacted the Town's revenues in 2003. State aid was reduced by a staggering \$1.4 million and the Town's investment income and continued to decline from \$441,361 in 2001 to \$208,000 in 2003.

The Town's employee benefit costs for health insurance and pension continue to soar. In the past six years, the Town's annual cost for these benefits has increased by \$2 million.

On a positive note, the Town paid only 1.3% to borrow \$30 million in short term notes for the Memorial School and High School Reconstruction Projects.

For the first time in recent memory, the number of employees working for the Town was reduced within the general government and the number of School Department employees was maintained at the same level as the previous year.

Other than the ongoing school renovation projects and Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade, no new capital improvements were funded. Despite the poor economy and a no growth budget, progress continues on several important projects.

The old Nantasket Pier Steamship building was demolished and removed in May and a short-term lease was signed with Steamboat Wharf Marina for the operation of a 50-slip marina. The Annual Town Meeting took no action on amending the zoning by-laws to allow for a limited number of residential units on Nantasket Pier and the Board of Selectmen authorized the issuance of a Request for Development Proposals for Nantasket Pier that conforms with the waterfront zoning district.

The Request for Proposals will be issued in the spring of 2004 and focus on a long-term lease for a 120-slip marina with accessory uses that includes public access.

The \$2.8 million Main Street Reconstruction Project funded and administered by the Massachusetts Highway Department encountered a drainage and wetland permit delay. However, all the required permits are expected to be finalized so that construction can begin in late summer/early fall of 2004. The reconstruction of the Fitzpatrick Way Bridge, another Massachusetts Highway Department project, was completed in the fall of 2003.

The West Corner Bridge/Tide Gate is the next major public works project. The engineering and design phase of this project is expected to cost \$230,000 and the Town's of Hingham and Cohasset are expected to each contribute a quarter share. We have worked with Congressman William Delahunt to obtain the estimated \$1.3 million for construction costs under the Army Corps of Engineers. The Town received a \$35,000 grant from the Conservation Law Foundation to evaluate the impacts the new bridge and tide gate will have on Straits Pond. A special thank you goes to the Straits Pond Watershed Association and Jason Burtner of Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management for their assistance.

The unusually heavy accumulation of seaweed along Nantasket Beach in May and June challenged us to draft a Seaweed Removal and Management Plan that would receive the approval from local and state regulatory agencies with the assistance of the Beach Management Committee.

The Town of Hull is the first community in the state to have such a plan. The Town will now be able to mechanically remove heavy accumulations of seaweed using a large metal beach rake to be attached to a backhoe. It is hoped that in the future, the seaweed removed from the beach will be composted and available as fertilizer.

Unfortunately, negotiations to purchase the former Atlantic Hill garage property at 21 Atlantic House Road terminated when an agreement could not be reached concerning the clean up of underground hazardous waste.

The ten (10) year contract for the operation of the Waste Water Treatment Plant was awarded to Aquarion Services, Inc. and is expected to save the Town \$1 million over the term of the agreement.

Ann MacNaughton of Hingham, MA was hired as Town Accountant in March and Arthur Flavin of Winthrop, MA was hired as Treasurer/Collector in November. Both individuals are expected to be valuable additions to the financial management team.

Finally, special thanks to Nancy Allen, Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager, whose organizational and administrative skills are invaluable.

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Christopher J. McCabe  
Town Manager