

2009 Annual Report
Office of the Town Manager

I respectfully submit to the citizens of Hull the Year 2009 Annual Report of the Town Manager's Office. The fiscal storm that has engulfed us for the past several years continues to rage. As a result of decreased state aid, declining local receipts and increased operating expenses we were in 2009 forced to continue making dramatic budgetary changes.

It is clear that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has determined that funding to local communities is not the priority it once was. Hull received approximately the same amount of State Aid in 2009 as it did in 1997

In September the Selectmen received the report from the Financial Planning Committee that identified the nature and scope of the financial challenges ahead. The Financial Planning Committee recommended an override to help address the challenges ahead.

The Board of Selectmen asked the Town Manager to create and present a balanced budget based on the current confines of Proposition 2 1/2.

In November, the Town Manager presented FY2010 BUDGET A. It was acknowledged, at the time of presentation that Budget A was not the preferred option but was an option that must be prepared and contemplated.

Recognizing that the choices were stark and that offering the residents the greatest degree of self-determination the Selectmen voted to place a debt-exclusion question before the voters of Hull. The Question would exclude from the annual tax levy the amount of the debt associated with the Jacobs School reconstruction, as well as, several smaller capital projects. The value of the question was \$1.62 million dollars.

In January the Town Manager presented Budget A: A balanced budget that did not rely upon the passage of the Proposition 2 1/2 debt-exclusion. In addition, the Town Manager presented Budget B. Budget B restored many of the reductions contemplated in Budget A; but required the passage of the Proposition 2 1/2 debt-exclusion to accomplish the restoration.

In continuing efforts to find savings all employees saw the health insurance contribution increase by 15%. This resulted in a \$600,000 savings to our health insurance line item. In addition most employees unions agreed to a second year of zero percent wage settlements.

Numerous public information sessions were held to discuss the options and to educate the public regarding the situation.

The question ultimately failed at the ballot. As a result the 2009 budget saw a long-list of operational changes in our government.

Assessors

- Staff reduction from 2 full-time clerical positions to 1.5 positions

Tax Collector

- Staff reduction from full time Treasurer to Part-time (35 hours per week to 28 hours per week- loss of 1 day per week)
- Eliminate part-time Clerical Position
- Slower retrieval of information, issuance of ML Certificates, etc

Parking Clerk

- Reduce Parking Clerk from 17.5 hrs/week to 12 hrs per week -
- Less availability for public. Will only address tickets on a pre-determined schedule

Boards and Commissions

- Elimination of Domestic Violence Grant that assists those in need

IT Department

- Will off-line a portion of this budget to the Cable Department as part of the Town's communication efforts

Police Department

- Loss of 1 position
- Increased perception in the fear of crime
- Loss of a full time detective
- Reduction in patrol strength
- Reduction in directed patrols
- Reduction in community policing
- Removal of full time prosecutor
- K-9 officer reduction or elimination of same
- Delayed response times

- Impact to officer safety

Dispatch

- Reduction in training funds. Off-set by grant

Animal Control

- Reduce animal control officer to part-time position 17.5 hrs per week
- Fewer hours for enforcement
- Diminished ability to respond to complaints

Fire Department

- Decreasing of staffing levels jeopardizes safe firefighting practices and capabilities and recognized national standards.
- The loss of one highly trained firefighter paramedic in which the town has recently invested over \$28,000.00 in training and personnel protective equipment.
- The elimination of the one firefighter/paramedic position
- Reduction in state mandated training and re-certification programs potentially further increasing the town's liability.

School Department

- Loss of Personnel
- No sports programs funded
- Imposition of new fees
- Larger classroom sizes

Building Department

- Reduce assistant building inspector to part-time
- Longer application review
- Times when office closed-lunch hours, etc
- Less availability to respond to complaints

Shellfish Warden

- Salary reduction.
- Less availability to public

Landfill

- Close Recycling Center

Board of Health

- Reduce Department to Health Agent and part-time clerical support and 1 Ohrs per week of Public Health Nurse
- Flu clinics curtailed
- Slower complaint resolution

Library

- Department services severely curtailed
- Loss of service for residents
- No service access to libraries in the Old Colony Network

Park and Recreation

- Funding slashed.
- All services will have to be fee based

War Memorial

- Funding slashed
- Landscaping service assumed by DPW
- Donations will need to be generated for other event related activities
- Capital Expenditure
- Funding at minimal level
- Not addressing long-term goals
- Continued infrastructure decline

We continued to navigate the precipitous decline. However, this did not come without a cost. We used sources of revenues that were not considered to be recurring placing substantial stress on our operational needs. If the current trend of reductions in State Aid continues we will be forced to diminish or eliminate services or seek alternate actions.

As we move forward with the fiscal year 2011 budget deliberations it is my hope that residents will recognize that we are in very difficult straits. I think it is safe to say that there are many items and initiatives that Departments would like to accomplish that are not currently possible given our fiscal situation.

The Town's budget has been under stress for several years. We have been paring departmental budgets for several years. Staffing reductions have occurred in the Police Department, Fire Department, School Department, and Library, Public Works Department as well as many smaller departments. The cost containment efforts of the last several years have resulted in departmental budgets that are lean and at their minimal level to provide the current level of service. If further cuts are made loss and elimination of services will be necessary.

As you review the Annual Reports from your Departments you will see that service requests have increased steadily and consistently over the last several years. As an organization we have been able to meet the increased demand by working more effectively. However, all of our Department's are at their operational limits given the resources that are available. They have been resourceful over the last several years but cannot continue to operate at the current level of services without additional resources.

I would like to thank all Town Employees and in particular, Nancy Allen, Janet Bennett and Terry Finneran in the Board of Selectmen/ Town Manager's Office for their tireless assistance throughout the year. I thank you for the opportunity to serve the residents of Hull.

Sincerely,

Philip E. Lemnios
Town Manager