



Town of Franklin

January 2002 Newsletter



Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2002

PHONE NUMEBRS

Town Hall - 891-2189
Town Garage - 891-1578

TOWN OFFICERS

Town Supervisor

Mary Ellen Keith

Town Councilmen

Gene Goff

Janet Goff

Timothy Goff

Walter Kretser

Town Justice

Roger Symonds

Highway Superintendent

Donald Vorrath

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Lauren LeFebvre

Attorney for the Town

Edward Murphy

Tax Assessor

Doug Tichenor

Code Enforcement Officer

Ed LaGree

TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

Regular town board meetings are held the second Monday of each month. The meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. with the board reviewing vouchers for payment.

The regular meeting, which is open to the public, begins at 7:00 p.m. The next Regular Town Board Meeting is Monday, February 11, 2002.

New Board Goes To Work

Elected and re-elected officials of the Town of Franklin were sworn in on January 1, 2002, in the Vermontville town hall. Roger Symonds, re-elected as Town Justice, was sworn in by the Town Clerk, Lauren LeFebvre, and he in turn administered the others: Mary Ellen Keith took her oath as the new Town Supervisor, and Walter Kretser and Janet Goff as new Councilpersons, and Gene Goff as Deputy Supervisor. Lauren LeFebvre, who has been serving as Deputy Town Clerk and Tax Collector, took the oath for the newly combined position of Town Clerk/Tax Collector. Donald Vorrath took the oath of office as the new Town Highway Superintendent, and Michael Canty took the oath as Deputy Highway Superintendent. Attending the ceremony were Tim Goff, a Town Councilman and several guests.

The new board met on January 4 for the annual organizational meeting. The board re-adopted the Rules for Procedure for the 2002 town board meetings and affirmed the Town of Franklin 2002 board appointments.

At the January 14 regular meeting, along with regular board issues, the board was presented a proposal by Clayton Smalley, of the Fletcher Farm Road, to post signs throughout the town at in-

tersections as his Eagle Scout project. The signs will direct people to recreational areas.

Clayton will organize scouts to do surveys of residents who live near intersections to decide what signs would be most helpful, and where. The Department of Conservation will help with the creation of signs. Different materials will be studied to determine which would be best looking, easiest to read for drivers, and to be long-lasting. Costs to the town will be minimal, as many materials will be donated.

The board recommended that a final design be used for all of the signs. The town approved the preliminary planning for the project.

The board also made a commitment to recycling of all trash and waste from the town.

Public attendance at board meetings varies, usually depending on a particular point of interest in a current matter or controversial issue. The town board encourages the residents of the town to attend as many meetings as they can. Those who come learn issues and conflicts first hand and always are encouraged to speak up—for or against an issue.

TOWN WEB PAGE (www.townoffranklin.com)

Lauren and Jeff LeFebvre, with Rainbow Graphics, will be updating and revamping the Town of Franklin's Web page (townoffranklin.com).

Lauren's request for suggestions for the new Web page brought in many responses especially through her e-mail (townclerk@townoffranklin.com). Featured in the new Web page will be a town calendar, agendas of upcoming meetings and minutes of recent meetings; forms for town business that can be down-loaded; a listing of recreational areas; listings of businesses/contractors; and regular features on Town of Franklin history.

Anyone with materials to have considered for inclusion in the town's Web page should contact Lauren. The Web page will be updated regularly to keep it current.

WHERE THERE'S SNOW ...

At the January 2002 regular meeting of the town board, bids were open for a new tandem for snowplowing. The bid was won by M.A. Jerry, with a purchase price \$130,915 on a three-year contract. The town will sell or trade in the 1993 tandem.

Highway Superintendent Don Vorrath addressed several issues concerning plowing. In response to a question regarding plowing after a recent snowstorm, Superintendent Vorrath gave the board a run down of the criteria he uses to decide when trucks are sent out to plow and the steps that are taken to make his decisions.

There were several safety issues Superintendent Vorrath asked for the public to consider regarding the town plowing:

One issue is the problem of children playing on the snow banks. Parents should know that with the blades down and snow flying off the slusher, the drivers often are not even able to see the children on the snow banks, let alone be able to maneuver or stop should a child be endangered. Parents are asked to please teach children to stay away from the road and snow banks when the plows are coming down the road.

It regularly happens in the winter that cars and plows share narrow roads. As a car approaches an on-coming plow truck, Vorrath asks that the drivers pull over to the right as far as they safely can, and consider slowing down. The plows can go only so far to their right, and everyone is safer if car drivers allow the trucks the road space they need.

The plow drivers also warn car owners that the snow flying and sand flying off the plow blades can damage vehicles parked too close to the road – please pull your cars back.

Vorrath suggested to the board that when the new truck is delivered that it be parked at the town hall for a while with an invitation to people to get into the cab to get an idea of what the road looks like from a plow driver's perspective, and to get a feel for just how big these vehicles are.

FOOD PANTRY

The St. Paul's Food Pantry is located behind the Town of Franklin Town Hall in Vermontville. The pantry is available to all in need. Thanks to the work of many volunteers — some regulars, some occasional — the food pantry is always ready to serve our commu-

nity. Emergency help can be arranged at any time by calling Mary Ellen Keith at 891-1619.

Distribution is held one Thursday a month from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Although it usually is about the third Thursday of each

month, it varies because it is scheduled around truck deliveries to the pantry. The dates are posted on the town sign, on the Web page, and in the paper.

Donations, new volunteers, always are welcome!

THE EVIL TAX COLLECTOR

by **Lauren LeFebvre**

As Tax Collector for the Town of Franklin for the past four years, I have the pleasure of following in the footsteps of the most hated people in the Bible. In those days tax collectors ranked right up there with murderers and thieves. Tax collectors had a lot more power then. A tax collector was required to collect the amount declared due by the King but could also impose any surcharge over and above the amount due and keep it for himself. That's why, 2000 years later, we still can't live it down.

In today's world a tax collector is what I like to call a "glorified bookkeeper". Generally, people think I had a major role in the creation of their tax bill. Not even close.

The only part of your bill I had a hand in is that little section on the top that states where to send payments to and what my office hours will be.

Gee Lauren, how does that bill get to me?

Well, fellow resident, I'm glad you asked! I don't know all the ins and outs but I'll do my best. Your property is assessed and given a value by the Town of

Franklin's appointed assessor, Doug Tichenor. He compiles the information into a "Tentative Assessment Roll" and submits it to the town clerk and places a Public Notice in the newspaper stating that the Town of Franklin Tentative Assessment Roll has been prepared and is available for public inspection at the office of the Town Clerk.

It is at this point, early May, that a property owner should inspect his/her assessment. This amount is what your taxes will be based on for the upcoming tax cycle (school and property) If you feel the assessed value is incorrect this is the time to contact the assessor.

Mr. Tichenor then submits this information to the Office of Real Property in Franklin County. This is done every year in July in order allow Real Property to prepare school tax bills.

Remember, as Town of Franklin Tax Collector, I have nothing to do with School Tax bills except for one thing, which will become clear soon.

When school tax collection is complete, all unpaid school tax bills are returned to the Franklin County Treasurer. The Treasurer's Office informs the Frank-

lin County Office of Real Property of all unpaid school taxes in the Town of Franklin. Around this time I am mailed a form by Real Property asking what I want printed on the bills regarding mailing address and office hours.

In late December, the Franklin County Office of Real Property prints your Franklin County and Town of Franklin tax bill. If you have unpaid school taxes, you will see this on your Town of Franklin tax bill as a "School Tax Relevy". (See, that's how I have a little something to do with school taxes)

Amazing how all this stuff happens without me and the only names on your tax bill are mine and yours, right?

Bored yet? Hang on, this is where I come into the picture. One day, right in the middle of Christmas and New Years my phone rings! The Franklin County Real Property Office informs me that the bills have been printed and the warrant (my permission to collect taxes) has been signed by the County LegislaturesIT'S SHOW TIME!

I drive to Malone to get 2000 (give or take a few) bills, the warrant and the tax roll. I then

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The Evil Tax Collector continues . . .

spend the next two days stuffing bills into envelopes. I've made a few changes in the past four years, though. I now have the bills professionally folded. That saves a huge amount of time. For the next step, my daughters are now old enough to help prepare the bills for mailing. One seals, one stamps. This also saves a huge amount of time.

Now I wait for the money to start rollin' in. During January, I am at the Town Hall in Vermontville Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. By law a tax collector must have three eight-hour business days a week in January.

The law also requires all payments received to be deposited into the bank within 24 hours of receipt or returned to the property owner. When I receive a post dated check I am left with two options: deposit it or send back to you. I'll leave that with you to ponder.

Once a week I wipe out the bank account and turn all funds collected that week over to the Town of Franklin Supervisor. The amount received by the Town of Franklin is stated in the Warrant.

When the Town receives all the money it is due, I then begin to remit the amount due to Franklin County to the Franklin County Treasurer. I'm getting ahead of myself, though.

In February I go back to my regular office hours of Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. It is usually around the middle of this month that all taxes due to the Town of Franklin Supervisor have been paid and I start sending money to the Franklin County Treasurer on a weekly basis.

In April, late notices are sent out to all residents who have not yet paid their tax bill. There are usually around 200.

At midnight on May 31, I am no longer authorized to accept tax payments, although I can accept payments postmarked May 31. All unpaid taxes are returned to the Franklin County Treasurer.

In early June, I report to the Treasurer's Office with my books balanced and a smile on my face. Not really, more like my knees knockin' and my heart poundin'. The paid and unpaid taxes are balanced

against the warrant and if that equals out, I'm free to go.

Boy, you really don't do much at all ,Lauren!

Hey, wait a minute! I do a lot. Just not what most people think I do. I've learned what I have so far from the school of hard knocks. The long and short of it all is this: If you need to know how much your tax bill is, whether a tax bill has been paid or if you need copies of bills or receipts, you want the tax collector. Everything else, well, I can point you in the right direction or give you a "form for that" but that's about it. I can answer questions, though. Give me a call or stop by any time.

One more thing: Seems crazy, but please don't assume that after you have built your home on that vacant piece of property you purchased a few years ago that your tax bill will reflect a new mailing address because you're now living there. It won't. You have to change the billing address; otherwise it will still be sent to the address you were at when you filed the deed with Franklin County. I can't change your billing address, but I can give you a form for that!

