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Colchester Selectboard
October 10, 2023

ACTION SHEET

Approve Goals for Town of Colchester

RECOMMENDED ACTION: The Colchester Selectboard moves to approve Goals of the Town of Colchester for 2023-2024 and Priorities, as outlined in an October 10, 2023 memo and attachments from Town Manager Aaron Frank.



MEMO From the Office of the Town Manager

To: Colchester Selectboard
From: Aaron Frank, Town Manager
Date: October 10, 2023
Re: Goals for Town of Colchester

Issue: Whether or not the Colchester Selectboard will approve Goals of the Town of Colchester for 2023-2024 and Priorities as outlined in an October 10, 2023 memo and attachments from Town Manager Aaron Frank?

It is important for the Town staff and Selectboard to review, align and set goals on annual basis.

Attached are:

- 1) 2023-2024 and Future Priorities
- 2) 2022-2023 Goals Completed

Background:

“The mission of the Town of Colchester is to provide to its citizens the highest quality municipal services possible with the resources available.”

FY 2020 Goals Completed and FY 2022 Goals narrative with pictures available [here](#)
FY 2022-2023 and Future Priorities were presented on April 2019 available [here](#)

Goal setting is important. But also, is accepting unforeseen challenges and opportunities which sometimes supersede or delay goals. One of my favorite quotes is from Dwight Eisenhower “Planning is Everything, the Plan is Nothing.”

Motion/Recommendation: The Colchester Selectboard moves to approve Goals of the Town of Colchester for 2023-2024 and Priorities as outlined in an October 10, 2023 memo and attachments from Town Manager Aaron Frank.

ASSESSOR

- Completed work on an online appeal site which would allow property owners to submit an appeal and schedule a hearing on the Assessor's web page
- Completed Assessor's Office yearly time table, including statutory deadlines
- Drafted RFP for Town-wide reassessment

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Assisted with securing financing for established 20+ year Colchester business
- Hosted with various departments the first Autumnal Market highlighting local businesses, artists, etc
- Coordinated new signage at Village Park, continuing marketing and branding campaign
- Spearheaded brownfield mitigation work on two sites. One is entirely complete and developed
- Successfully completed New Town Center renewal
- Served as liaison for new Nursing Home and Fort property owner
- Updated, printed and distributed Colchester Tourism brochure, 10,000 distributed annually
- Relunched available sites & vacant space on GIS map on website

FINANCE

- Clean audit
- Scanned in all old payroll files
- Accounts Payable Invoices are being scanned each warrant for electronic access
- Processed cash flow for investments and invested in treasury bonds

FIRE

- Ordered replacement fire engine for Village Station
- Ordered replacement fire hoses and bunker gear
- Replace flooring at Center Station
- Hired fourth career firefighter and assigned a member of the manager's office to work full-time in the department for the next year, bringing the full-time staff to six

2022 - 2023 Department Goals

Achieved (non-recurring)

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Rolled out a revised Training Curriculum for all new hires and bi-annual for current staff
- Spearheaded recruitment, hiring and onboarding of 29 new staff members in FY23
- Coordinated a successful on-site VMERS informational event for staff
- Coordinated, completed and administered a successful open enrollment process for all workgroups
- Completed review and renewal of several Town insurance contracts

LIBRARY

- Goal 1: Build on Success
 - Expand hours to pre-COVID level (this is almost done—we just have Fridays that are shorter days)
 - Install another new Little Free Library in the Fort
 - Replace two Little Free Libraries that are beyond repair
 - Install new book drop in the Fort to be emptied by volunteers
- Goal 4: Stewardship of the Village Green
 - Pollinator gardens installed/maintained by volunteers

PARKS & RECREATION

- Gained voter approval for construction of Recreation Center on Bayside/Hazelett property
- Assisted with reversion of Colchester Causeway back to the State of Vermont
- Completed resurfacing of Causeway Connector Path
- Installed new park sign at Village Park
- Updated rules/regulations on signs in Colchester Parks
- Replaced roadside fence at Fort Ethan Allen Cemetery
- Replaced shingles on shuffleboard courts shelters at Bayside Park
- Installed two memorial benches one at Airport Park and one at Bonanza Park

PLANNING & ZONING

- Updated all forms and documents to electronic, readily-accessible versions
- Successfully sought and achieved renewal of the Town's designated New Town Center
- Collaborated with other Town departments to ready and respond to the end of the local delegation of the State wastewater and potable water program
- Worked with Planning Commission and Selectboard to approve two sets of amendments to the Development Regulations, Supplements 44 (October, 2022) and Supplement 45 (April, 2023)

2022 - 2023 Department Goals

Achieved (non-recurring)

PLANNING & ZONING (cont.)

- Completed rezoning efforts along East Lakeshore Drive
- Researched and prepared a comprehensive update to the department's fee schedule for early FY24 consideration and adoption
- Processed 524 permits, authored 227 Bianchi letters, and collected more than \$320,000 in permit revenue
- Assisted the volunteer Development Review Board in review of 54 applications
- Received approval for annual Community Rating Survey program for FEMA flood plain properties
- Worked as part of a collaborative team that hosted the Town's first Autumnal Market at the Town-owned green at Severance Corners in October, 2022

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Policies – Complete revision of following General Orders: Internal Investigations, Fair and Impartial Policing, Promotions and Transfers, Audio/Video Recordings and Retention, Use of Force. Reviewed all other GOs
- Worked with Human Resources to expand recruitment audience. Recruitment video completed and distributed in social media. Expanded number of veteran officers involved in recruitment
- As president of Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police, testified in front of several Vermont legislative committees and participated in several state-level activities involving policing reform policies and statutes
- Command vehicle equipped and put into service. Deployed in several critical incidents and large events
- Formal and informal leadership training of potential departmental personnel
- Mid-level promotion assessment held. Jesse Treier, Victor Bitca promoted to Sergeant
- Administration promotion assessment held. Roger Fisher promoted to Lieutenant
- Body worn camera and in-car video/audio retention and distribution procedures put in place
- Evidence Technician Jonathan Wheeler successfully completed training in use of mobile communications forensic examinations

PUBLIC WORKS

- Installed solar powered pedestrian crossing signals at Williams Road and Jason Drive
- Completed sidewalk extension along Blakley Road
- Completed paving on five Town roadways, including Bay Road
- Completed public tree assessment for the development of an Emerald Ash Borer Plan
- Constructed new septic system and oil grease separator at the Rescue Station
- Installed a public EV charging station at the Town Offices
- Obtained construction funding for the Bayside Intersection roundabout project

PUBLIC WORKS (cont.)

- Developed and gained approval for a wastewater capital reserve fee for the Severance Corner's Growth Center
- Completed design for water quality improvements in Shore Acres
- Completed phosphorus reduction feasibility analysis
- Completed Town wide stormwater outfall analysis
- Completed stormwater system repairs on Williams Road
- Developed and gained approval for Stormwater Management Agreements to address 3-acre permit requirements
- Installed a temporary bridge on Creek Farm Road
- Completed 1,000 feet of stormwater pipe lining

RESCUE

- Maintained our significant volunteer provider pool
- Updated eight departmental policies
- Reviewed and adjusted rescue fees

TOWN CLERK

- Assessed capacity of vault for future permanent Land Records, changed book size and shelving to increase available space
- Assessed workload related to vital records management vs need, and stopped the procedure to print records from the required state system
- Completed update to Cloud-based Animal Licensing Software with Staff training
- Staff trained and used new DLL online licensing software
- Successfully implemented new Election Tabulators and trained staff and volunteers in their use
- Successfully implemented new Election procedures related to ballot curing, end of day procedures and absentee voting
- Signed off on a new digitization project of permanent land records books that date from early 1700 to 1922

2022 - 2023 Department Goals

Achieved (non-recurring)

TOWN MANAGER

- Added language translation options for visitors
- Improved IT Security Systems
- Completed transition of Causeway to State of Vermont while continuing maintenance limited to \$20,000 annually
- Identified and began permitting two solar farm locations (one which did not come to fruition despite significant efforts, and one which is underway). Developed significant solar component for Town Recreation center. Installed public electric car charger at Town hall
- Identified continued tenancy for 883 Blakely Road
- Integrated department head evaluations into Town-wide goal setting
- Implemented personally identifiable information education program
- Evaluated and revised development fee structure
- Planning and Zoning Department is functioning well after significant staffing changes
- Developed plans and funding for Recreation Center, engaged directly with boards and commissions and the public, oversaw the permitting efforts thereof
- Developed a municipal services budget balancing costs and affordability, maintaining high budget pass rate, and positioning Colchester as the second lowest property tax per resident among inner Chittenden County communities
- Coordinated efforts to appeal to the State of Vermont for safety changes on US Rt. 2. Worked with neighbors and police department to address speeding on Church Road
- Drafted response to Westbury Home Owners Association, Incorporated regarding provision of contracted services and or creation of a municipal village
- Disposed of two unneeded properties, increasing reserves by \$224,000 for future capital needs
- With the Selectboard, transferred an unused residential property to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity raising funds for the Town and creating a new home
- Worked with Selectboard to draft a declaration of inclusion for Colchester in keeping with Colchester's ongoing training in this arena. Implemented language translation option for Library and Town hall
- Engaged in outreach to fill open board and commission seats
- Developed information for regional dispatch so that municipal members could decide whether they wished to fund its operations and worked to resolve Colchester's interests therein following a Selectboard decision not to fund CCPSA for FY 24
- Funded \$140,000 in future communications equipment needs from overhead fees generated from contracted dispatch operations
- Updated annual capital budget including many adaptive changes to address costs and equipment/vendor availability

2022 - 2023 Department Goals

Achieved (non-recurring)

TOWN MANAGER (cont.)

- Transitioned on-site wastewater program to the State of Vermont, saving the Town's taxpayers \$58,000 in annually recurring staffing costs, with little change to the program
- Provided significant support in researching and siting a State Historic Marker to acknowledge the efforts of the First Special Services Force, which was stationed in Colchester
- Evaluated Colchester's potential membership in a communications union district
- Provided input to Colchester and other Legislators on issues of importance to the Selectboard including assessment, local option taxes, and funding for regional dispatch
- Navigated changes in public safety leadership and negotiated a new contract w/ Saint Michael's Fire
- Coordinated with Planning/Zoning, Public Works and Developers to develop a mechanism to fund improvements to the sewer system in Severance Corners that was affordable to the developers without impacting other taxpayers who do not receive wastewater services from the Town
- Provided information about moorings and dockage in Mallets Bay
- Helped guide New Town Center Renewal
- Served as support staff for the Conservation Commission attending meetings and a work session
- Maintained a high level of quality staffing despite shortages of applicants
- Improved IT security and added resources to staffing
- Trained employees about protecting personally identifiable information
- Worked with the Treasurer and Finance Director to evaluate opportunities to invest Town funds in the current high interest rate environment without risking principal. Specifically, we have invested \$13.2M in US treasury bonds from three to six months at rates from 5.3% to 5.4%
- Provided information to the Selectboard regarding creation of a Village within the Town
- Worked with Town Clerk to identify need for Cemetery Advisory Committee, at least in the shorter term

SELECTBOARD

- Voters approved Community Recreation Center
- Voters approved Town Budget and tax rate, which were both at a lower rate than inflation, evidencing the efforts of the Selectboard and staff that work hard to keep municipal services and the municipal services tax affordable
- Revised fees to maximize non-tax funding of municipal service budget
- Substantial grants applied for and received for capital projects
- Balance Community Needs vs. Wants and Fiscal Sustainability
- Newsletter focused on volunteer boards and committees
- Boards and Commissions re-staffed after COVID

2022 - 2023 Department Goals

Achieved (non-recurring)

SELECTBOARD (cont.)

- Fairness/Equity addressed in Statement of Inclusion, housing affordability efforts as documented in studies and reports: Colchester has among the largest supply of affordable housing in Chittenden County, both in absolute terms and in percentage terms. Colchester has a high percentage of low-income residents compared to other communities in Chittenden County, but one of the highest home ownership rates among the lower-income communities. Some of our efforts Town-wide, in Economic Diversity, Human Resources, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Planning and Zoning, Library, and Policing, are explained in this [memo](#)
- Advanced the Malletts Bay Sewer Project
- Worked with Paul Simon of Severance Park and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to facilitate aspects of proposal beyond the scope of the permitting process



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

ASSESSOR

- Update itemized instruction booklet for Property/Tax Specialist
- Develop plan and timeline for Town-wide reassessment including staffing, budget, workflow, customer service/appeals process, and review of assessment data by staff prior to public disbursement--there shall be a Town staff consideration after the contractor review and before the Lister's appeals
- **Hire reappraisal firm to conduct Town-wide reassessment by 2026**
- **Write contract with hired reappraisal firm that will include but not limited too; work timeline, valuation schedule, citizen correspondence, inspection schedule, valuation parameters, insurance requirements, staffing requirements, information sharing, scheduled reporting, Town and state oversight, project management, valuation and inspection manual requirements, data completion and data turnover requirements and dates, appeal hearing requirements, costs, termination clause**
- **Review need to reassess Mobile Home Parks to comply with State Statutes and Town equity**
Reassess parks if required
- **Contract with mapping, for oblique imagery, street view imagery and sketch verification analysis**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Continue assisting agricultural businesses impacted by the flooding and monitor resources available for recovery efforts**
- **Determine new website vendor and develop/transition to new site**
- **Research potential additional events for Severance Corners**
- **Develop and present the Growth Center renewal application to the state**
- Spearhead work with Water Tower Hill owners and potential tenants
- Continue hosting Autumnal Market and determine capacity for additional events
- Researching potential commercial tenants for Severance Corners quadrants
- Coordinate with VTrans on communications to businesses regarding DDI construction
- Retain existing business and maintain services to attract new businesses to Town
- Maintain relationships with local, state and federal partners for resources to businesses
- Continue marketing and branding campaign with emphasis on new opportunities



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

FINANCE

- Clean audit
- Discard/document old accounts payable documents to free up room in basement
- Cross-train employees (new employee as of last spring)
- Continue to work on ways to improve utility billing. Possibility of using CWD as third-party billing
- **Implement additional banking procedures for added fraud detection**

FIRE

- Bring the different groups that constitute the department closer together
- Highlight and celebrate the successes of the department as a whole
- Recruit and retain volunteer members
- Continue and improve relationship with Saint Michael's Fire
- Continue to improve the department's Cadet Program, including developing standards for membership
- Replacement of department air packs
- Upgrade Village and Mallets Bay Stations to LED lighting
- Update and develop new department Standard Operating Guidelines
- Continue to standardize personal protective equipment (Bunker Gear)
- Continue replacing department's portable radios
- **Create file sharing system for department**

RESCUE

- Continue rewriting department policies and procedures
- Continue to foster volunteer providers within Rescue
- Continue to train career staff as paramedics
- Review and adjust rescue fees
- **Evolve department to new leadership structure retaining Rescue as its own separate Department**



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Update Employee Handbook
- Continue digitization of personnel records
- Recruitment and onboarding
- Continue monitoring and assessing annual performance review process, revise where necessary
- Revisit and review current use of Employee Self Service and seek to broaden the scope of use
- **Review orientation process for new hires across departments and revise to improve consistency, remove redundancy and add efficiency**
- **Outreach campaign to staff seeking to increase participation in supplemental retirement offerings**
- **Create/update SOP materials for claims reporting**
- **Establish consistent payroll reporting across departments in conjunction with Finance**
- **Support successful negotiations and implementation of new contracts for AFSCME and CPOA**

LIBRARY

- Goal 1: Build on Success
 - Continue to rebuild community partnerships
 - Continue and expand programming as opportunities allow, paying special attention to reaching beyond cultural norms
 - **Investigate reorganization of collection, paying special attention to addition of digital items**
 - **Investigate youth programming for working families' evenings/weekends**
- Goal 2: Foster Creative Innovations
 - Continue Master Gardener programming in conjunction with pollinator gardens and seed library
 - Investigate new ways to partner with schools
- Goal 3: Focus on Civic Engagement
 - Continue to provide accurate Town information
- Goal 4: Stewardship of the Village Green
 - Replace picnic tables with ADA accessible ones
 - Continue to work with Parks to maintain StoryWalk® at Village Park
 - Continue to provide free public meeting space to the community
 - **Install raised vegetable beds and small compost bin**

LIBRARY (cont.)

- Goal 5: Capacity Building
 - Complete new strategic plan for next five years
 - Continue regular one-on-one meetings with staff to check-in informally
 - Continue weekly staff meetings
 - **Continue to explore staff strengths to build relationships and expand abilities**
 - **Ensure staff attendance at Friends meetings**

PARKS & RECREATION

- Provide safe parks for recreational activities
- Maintain the infrastructure for all municipal properties
- Maintain all greenways on public recreation paths
- Manage, update and implement Parks Capital Plan
- Provide afterschool, summer and special event programming
- Provide recreational opportunities to residents of all ages
- Park and program planning
- Project development, management and implementation
- Management and regulation of departmental ordinances
- Provide rental opportunities of park amenities to the public
- **LED lighting upgrade to Bayside Softball Field and Bayside Tennis Courts**
- **Evaluate pedestrian access to pickleball courts at Airport Park**
- **Identify funding mechanisms to create an endowment fund for the Recreation Center**
- **Improve drainage at Airport Park and improve the perimeter walking trail**
- **Improve walking path at Fort Ethan Allen Parade Grounds**
- **Improve access to Lower Bayside Park**

PUBLIC WORKS

- Continue advancing the Malletts Bay Sewer Project
- Continue advancing the Prim and West Lakeshore Drive Intersection Project
- Continue advancing the Bayside Intersection Project
- Continue advancing the Shore Acres water quality improvement project
- Continue refinement of Phosphorus Control Plan
- Continue development of plans for 3-acre stormwater sites



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

PUBLIC WORKS (cont.)

- Continue to develop a comprehensive training program for maintenance staff
- Continue development of an Emerald Ash Borer Plan
- Continue developing alternatives analysis for the Creek Road Bridge
- Continue design work for stormwater improvements in the Smith creek watershed
- Continue design for the replacement of a large diameter culvert on Middle Road
- **LED lighting upgrades to multiple Town buildings**
- **Replace heating system in Rescue Building**
- **Improve roof at Library**
- **Advance Prim Road and West Lakeshore Drive Intersection project to construction**
- **Advance Malletts Bay Sewer Project**
- **Install solar powered pedestrian crossing signals at Blakely and Williams and at Costco**
- **Pave 16 Town roadways**

POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Recruitment – will be eight officers down by October 2023. Goal of three recruits in each bi-annual academy through FY 24
- Change of command. Smooth transition of command leadership
- Continue training standards despite low staffing levels. Prepare officers for new assignments
- Maintain strong partnership with Colchester School District
- Continued review/revision of General Orders
- **Develop more comprehensive plan with Fire/Rescue regarding active attacks**
- **Task analysis with intent to evaluate current and future use of civilian personnel in non-traditional roles**
- **Evaluate work space and building use for more efficient work environment**
- **Explore more comprehensive approaches to traffic safety**

TOWN CLERK

- Continue to cross-train employees in preparation for staff retirement in the next two years
- Continue to populate all information into our Cemetery software. Have completed two of the six cemeteries
- Continue to work with VT Old Cemetery Assoc. for monument repair at the Munson Cemetery. Have a date in June 2024 to complete repairs
- Continue to prepare for Grand List software to change to statewide, online at beginning of 2023. VT Tax Dept. timeline was pushed back



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

TOWN CLERK (cont.)

- Continue to research and potentially go out to bid for new tax management software to start FY2025. VT Tax Dept timeline was pushed back
- **Upgrade Land Records Software to Cloud-based with training and hardware updates**
- **Prepare long-range maintenance plan for non-landscape elements of Colchester cemeteries with Parks Department**

PLANNING & ZONING

- Continue to fulfill the requirements of 24 V.S.A Chapters 83 and 117 addressing building and planning regulations
- Continue annual Flood Rating queries and report
- Continue excellent customer service in daily permitting activities
- Continue to build communication and cooperation with other Town departments
- Decrease permit and Bianchi letter turnaround times
- Increase outreach to business community
- Revise Form Based Code requirements for Growth Center/Severance Corners area
- Update Town's 2000 Open Space Plan
- Review, update, and modernize Town ordinances (peddlers, carters, event)
- **Continued updates to Colchester Development Regulations**
- **Establish predictable schedule for annual permit fee increases**
- **Renew the Town's formal Growth Center Designation via approval from the state's Downtown Development Board**
- **Begin data collection for 2027 Town Plan update**
- **Seek funding for identified planning priorities through state and federal grants**

TOWN MANAGER

- Continue to adjust services and policies in response to fiscal, supply chain, inflation, cost, employee availability, and funding constraints
- Continue to expand on staff, volunteer public safety, Selectboard and Board and Commission chair training and education on diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency
- Develop an FY 25 Budget that balances continued provision of services and retention of staff with affordability
- Continue board alternate roles with CSWD and VLCT PACIF
- Continue to implement Malletts Bay Sewer Project



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

- Continue to implement Colchester Recreation Center

TOWN MANAGER (cont.)

- Continue to plan for conclusion of lease for 883 Blakely Rd. while maintaining use for UVM Family Practice and increasing revenues for Town
- Review Heritage Plan's overlap and integration with Town Plan
- Update purchasing policy
- Assist with consolidation and transition of water supply services
- Continue condemnation of 885 East Lakeshore Drive
- **Negotiate Contracts with Collective Bargaining units: AFSCME and CPOA**
- **Find additional staff assistance for the Town Manager's office**
- **Find off-taker and enter into contract for solar credits which exceed statutory limit of 500 kW DC (Town has a goal to generate energy equal to energy consumed, which is almost double the statutory limit)**
- **Update Future Possible Resource Needs Awareness Document**
- **Update UVM Support Agreement (payment in lieu of taxes)**
- **Monitor Regional Dispatch progress and or return of Town's \$120,310**
- **Identify a Police Chief following Chief Allen's Retirement**
- **Update Planning and Zoning Fees to include annual escalator**
- **Address US Rt. 2 Safety**
- **Continue to address outstanding zoning and health violations: Sharrow Circle, Malletts Bay Campground, Mongeon Bay Properties**
- **Identify and propose additional unused properties for sale**
- **Assist the police department with external staffing**
- **Upgrade Town-wide phone system**
- **Upgrade police/fire/rescue radio infrastructure**



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

SELECTBOARD

- Build Recreation Center
- Build Malletts Bay Sewer
- Balance Community Needs vs. Wants and Fiscal Sustainability
 - Grants
 - Non-tax funding
 - Private sector investments in property
 - Cost containment
 - Efficiency
 - Maintain what we have first
 - Add resources as needs increase with community growth
- Long-term, vision-based, decision making:
 - Heritage Project/Town Plan
 - Fairness/Equity
 - Diverse development conforming with Town Plan
 - Infrastructure for quality of life and opportunities for business
 - Maintain natural resources for future enjoyment
 - Water quality
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Educated and engaged community



2023 – 2024 and Future Priorities

Continued/Recurring and New

To be tempered with staff, equipment and material availability

PLANS TO BE IMPLEMENTED

- Selectboard Priorities
- Emergency Management Plan Annual Update
- Town Plan
- Heritage Plan
- Capital Plans
 - Facilities, Equipment and Vehicles
 - Capital Transportation
 - Fire Capital
 - Park Capital
 - Information Technology
 - Communications Equipment
 - Public Safety Capital
 - Stormwater Capital
- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Plan and Permit
- Exit 16 improvements
- Exit 17 development
- CIRC Alternative projects
- Emergency Operations Plan
- Operational efficiency and budget reduction