

NOTES FROM TOWN HALL
Town Administrator Rosemary Cashman

Police Chief. The Selectmen have appointed William F. Mulligan as the next Police Chief. He succeeds John Miceli who valuably served the town for 10 years prior to his retirement. Chief Mulligan has worked in the Police Department in Merrimack, New Hampshire for the past 33 years, and has been the Chief since 2002. The Selectmen selected him after reviewing 69 resumes and interviewing 9 candidates. The Town was fortunate to have had so many qualified candidates apply for the job, although this made the Selectmen's decision all the more difficult. Chief Mulligan is expected to begin on July 1.

Town Meeting. The Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 15, 2007, beginning at 7:00 p.m., at the Elementary School Cafetorium. Please attend.

Town Center and Shurfine Market. At the Town Meeting, the Community Preservation Committee will be recommending the purchase of the Shurfine Market property. The cost of \$1,100,000 will be funded by community preservation funds. Unfortunately, this purchase seems to have created some negative publicity about its purpose and funding. The basic facts are these:

1. Location. This purchase is a key piece to the development of a Town Center along Middlesex Road from Bryants Lane to Westford Road. The Shurfine property sits right smack in the middle of the proposed Town Center.

2. Master Plan and Economic Development Plan. The Town's Master Plan and Economic Development Plan recommend the development of a Town Center. The Town is divided by 2 major roadways (Route 3 and Middlesex Road) and does not have a formal Town Center. The goals for the Town Center are: a) develop a Town Common where citizens can congregate for town events and other activities; b) provide sidewalks so that citizens can walk to various places; c) promote the use of 3 existing town-owned buildings that are currently vacant (Winslow School, Littlefield Library, Old Town Hall); d) provide additional funds to the Town via the possible rental of the Town buildings; e) encourage economic development and job creation; g) assist in the protection and/or re-use of historic buildings and resources.

3. Grant. The Town has been awarded a state grant to work on the creation of a Town Center, including recommendations for zoning changes and design guidelines. It is expected that this study will be completed by the end of the year. This study is only one step in the process. Any construction and improvements in the Town Center would need to be discussed and implemented in the years ahead.

4. Design. The future design of the Shurfine property has not yet been determined, and a formal design will need to be done for the entire property. It is likely that the building will be demolished and a small park will be created next to Flint's Pond which is behind the existing building. Parking spaces will need to be provided. However, a parking lot is not the goal of this purchase. The primary goal is to provide some open space in the Town Center along Flint's Pond for all citizens to enjoy whether visiting or driving by the property.

5. Funding Source. This purchase will be funded by the Community Preservation Fund. The Community Preservation Fund was established by a vote of the Town a few years ago. Taxpayers are assessed a surcharge of 3% on their taxes each year. At the present time, the State is matching dollar for dollar the amount contributed to the fund by the

town. The fund can only be used for open space, historic resources, and affordable housing. It cannot be used for the daily operation of town and school departments. Furthermore, if the voters changed the 3% surcharge to a smaller amount such as 1%, the difference of 2% would not be available for use by town and school departments.

6. Summary. The Community Preservation Committee has been in negotiations for the purchase of the Shurfine property for the past few years. The property owners are ready to sell. The time is now for the Town to buy.