

Another Bridge Needs Repair

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

Early last month, Town Administrator Mark Stetson received an unsettling letter from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT). It announced bad news about the bridge on Bradley Lake Road that crosses Hame Shop Brook. In boldface it said:

Andover Critical Bridge Deficiency
There is a serious continued deterioration of the steel beams, with holes rusted through seven of nine beams. The live load capacity is severely reduced.

The letter recommended posting the bridge for a 3-ton weight limit and for passenger cars only, which the Road Agent did promptly.

In earlier DOT inspections the bridge had received a clean bill of health, so to learn that seven of its nine steel beams have holes rusted through them came as a surprise.

DOT has proposed a \$120,000 project to replace the bridge deck, with the state picking up 80% of the cost as they usually do. That leaves \$24,000 as an



unexpected budget item for Andover to deal with in next year's budget.

Fixing The Problem

Within the next couple of weeks, crews will be working to add reinforcement to the worst beams in order to accommodate snow plows, fuel delivery trucks, and emergency vehicles.

DOT has further proposed to fast-track a complete rebuild project to remove the old bridge deck and steel beams and replace them with a new structure. The project should get underway in late spring or early summer of 2006. One problem yet to be worked out is how to accommodate residents during the estimated two days that the bridge will have to be closed.

the Andover Beacon

AndoverBeacon.com December 2005 \$2.00

Andover Tax Bills Up 16%

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

The tax bills arrived in households across Andover this past month, and they are about 16% higher than last year's tax bills. To figure out what's going on, you have to look at the various rates – town, school, county, and state – that get combined into your final bill.

Town Tax Rate

The town tax rate is unchanged from last year, at \$1.44 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Again this year the Selectmen used money from prior year budget surpluses to cover any expenses that would otherwise cause an increase in the town tax rate.

Fire Department Tax Rates

Both the East Andover Fire Department tax rate (which appears on the tax bills of East Andover residents) and the Andover Fire Department tax rate (which appears on every one else's tax bills) were nearly the same as last year's, at \$.32 and \$.58 per \$1,000, respectively.

School Tax Rate

The school tax rate is up this year due to two factors: The total school budget is up by approximately 5%, and the amount of the previous end-of-year surplus was about \$150,000 less than the year before.

State law requires that all money the school has not spent at the end of the year be turned back to the town to help reduce the next year's tax rate. The surplus amount used to reduce the 2004 tax rate was \$262,483. The amount available to reduce this year's tax rate was only about \$95,000.

The school budget is approved in March, over five months before the school year starts. That budget anticipates a large number of variables like special

education needs, the number of students being tuitioned to Merrimack Valley High School, the number of faculty opting for health insurance coverage, and so on. Prudent management and a little luck resulted in the larger than normal surplus in 2004. This year we weren't as fortunate.

The result of both of these factors means the school tax rates (state and local, combined) on this year's tax bill are up by almost 19% at \$9.01 per \$1,000.

County Tax Rate

The county tax rate is much higher this year, up over 22% at \$2.29 per \$1,000. Part of that increase comes from the federal government having put an end to the "bed tax" that the state was allowed to charge nursing homes. The nursing homes were 100% reimbursed by the federal Medicaid program for the bed taxes they paid to the state. The program was a way for the federal government to fix some inequities in the Medicaid reimbursement formula without having to change the formula itself.

See Tax Bills on page 2



Veterans Day At AE/MS. Dozens of area veterans were on hand for the special program at AE/MS, including (seated) Bill Leber, Wallace Scott, Frank Haley, Pete Thompson, Willis Nowell, Sheldon Rich, Richard Lamos, Skip Powers, Peter Zak. Middle: Irv Dickerman, Percy Hill, Kevin Barry, Roger Henderson, Bryant Adams, Lloyd Perreault, Gene Poulin, Ralph Doe, George West, Darrell Sykes, Dennis Wright. Back: Hastings Rigollet, Larry Shedd, Wilbur Cate, Leighton Terwilliger, Francis Frame (hidden), Don Mayo, Mike Haley, Jay Boynton, Tim Frost, Robert Campbell, Dave Grover.

Photo by Charlie Darling

New Town Web Site Online

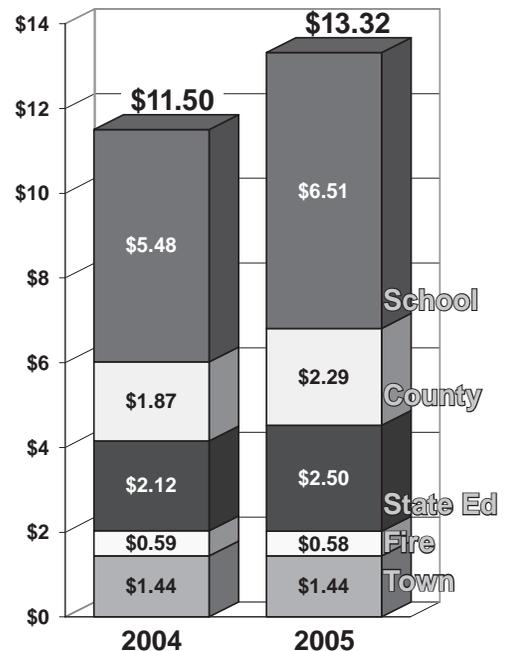
By Roger Godwin
For the Beacon

Andover's new Town Web site is now up and running at www.AndoverNH.us. Stitched together by the efforts of Nate Laffan, Proctor Academy '01 and Lewis & Clark University '05, while on an extended visit home to Canaan before a year's further study in Italy, the site is hosted on Proctor Academy's servers.

The site is intended to be informational and to save Andover residents and others visits to Town Hall. It contains all local ordinances and regulations and numerous maps as well as information on town groups and activities ranging

from kiddie stuff to local businesses to our local non-profit organizations. There is also a look at Andover history and albums of historic and scenic photos.

The Web site is very much a work in progress, with numerous pages to be completed as time, accumulation of specifics, and Webmeister Roger Godwin's learning of the software permit. Please e-mail all corrections and updates to godlaw@adelphia.net, along with the specifics of any local or locally-owned business you would like to be included in the prospective Yellow Pages addition to the site – business name, address, phone number, e-mail, Web site address, and owner's/manager's name.



ANDOVER TAX RATES per \$1,000. East Andover tax rates differ only in the Fire amounts.

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