

Beacon Bits

People stop me in town and ask how the *Beacon's* fundraising is going. The thermometer below pretty much tells the story – it's going well, but not brilliantly.

I confess to being a "glass 14% full" kind of person, so I'm thrilled that 156 families have showed their support for the *Beacon* in its second year. But there's no denying that the glass is, indeed, 86% empty. Nearly 1,000 Andover families have not quite gotten around to sending a check.

If you haven't gotten "a round tuit" yet, please tear out the form below and put it in your "checks to be written" pile. It's the only way the *Beacon* will be able to keep paying its bills.

The Perfect Holiday Gift

The form below also works for a gift subscription to the *Beacon*. You couldn't ask for an easier or more thoughtful gift for someone who has to live elsewhere (though a *Beacon* t-shirt, available at the Thrift Shop, is certainly a close second).

More Helping Hands

My New Year's resolution is to help more people get excited about helping make the *Beacon* happen every month. The more people we involve in creating the *Beacon* every month, the more likely it is that the *Beacon* will endure for the long term.

We're doing pretty well in the writing, editing, and proofreading departments, but could use more help organizing and prepping photos. And we *really* need more help managing things like the flood of stories and photos we get every month; the accounting; ads and advertisers; fundraising; and so on.

It's something to think about for the New Year. Until then, have a wonderful holiday season!



Next Month's Beacon...

...should be in mailboxes on Friday, Dec. 30. Please get all ads, articles, etc. to us by **Thursday, Dec. 15** at the latest. And earlier is always better!

Letters

I would like to thank the Selectmen for presenting me with the *Boston Post Cane*. It is a great honor! Thanks, too, to my family and friends for coming.

I also want to thank Ms. Hildebrand's and Mr. Jensen's second grade classes for my nice posters. They were a thoughtful surprise and I have them hanging on my wall.

Frances Huntoon

Less than a year into the new state administration and the property taxes (NH's major source of revenue) have increased 16%. This in spite of the fact that the rate of inflation just exceeded 4% - a recent high water mark for that index. Lest we think that "fire protection and town services" have gone out of control - they haven't and remain a constant \$0.59 and \$1.44 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation respectively - we find that the major increases are the school budget, the state school tax and the county assessments and that each of these budget items in turn depends strongly on the policies and actions of that state government.

Hardly a month goes by that the governor does not decry the existence of the State School Tax and his desire to eliminate it and yet in 2005 that tax increased by almost 15%. I agree with

the governor that the tax is an administrative nightmare and should be eliminated but I see no effort to do so.

It won't take many property tax increases of 16% before the homeowners will cry uncle and "demand" relief. Saviors will readily come to the rescue with their broad based tax proposals - for political reasons the income tax is probably the only option. The important thing here is not the size of the tax (it will be described as "small and focussed" by its sponsors) but who will control the funds. An income tax that goes directly into the coffers of each town would be perfectly feasible (and acceptable to many of us) but it will never happen. The arguments against this happening will be many and varied but the main thrust (but never articulated) will be that the towns are not capable of managing a modern, sophisticated community. Notice how well our modern, sophisticated cities, states and federal governments function.

While we need all of these levels of government for better or worse, we don't need more control of local communities by the state and federal governments.

Paul J. Fopiano

Tax Bills from page 1

With the bed tax gone, the state lost a big chunk of federal Medicaid money. This caused a \$750,000 budget shortfall in Merrimack County, which is why, in part, the county tax rate is up over 22% this year.

But there may be more to this jump than just the vanishing bed tax. Andover's share of the Merrimack County assessment was \$328,523 in 2003. This year, our share is \$596,445, an increase of almost 82%. But in that same two-year period, the total Merrimack County assessment only increased by 36%.

So why has Andover's share of the overall county assessment increased by so much more than the overall budget itself has increased? State Representative Jim Danforth of Andover has had meetings with county officials, but so far they haven't been able to give him a good answer. He plans to continue meeting with them and will report what he finds in the *Beacon*.

Corrections

In our list of Andover veterans in the November issue, we accidentally changed **Larry Wilson** to Larry Williams. We're very sorry for the mistake. Larry dropped us an e-mail from Iraq, where he's stationed at Camp Speicher with the 1159th Medical Company out of Concord. Stay safe, Larry!

BEACON MEMBERS WIN!

Each month the *Beacon* holds a random drawing among its members to give away valuable prizes provided by area businesses. **Become a member** for a year, support the *Beacon*, and join the fun! This month's winners are:

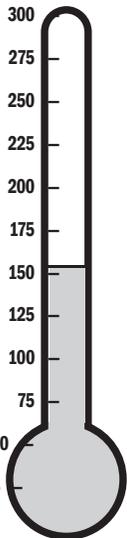
Artisan's Workshop	Pottery Platter	Roberta & Spencer Sullivan
Blackwater Junct. Rest.	Breakfast for Two	Julie & Don Mayo
Bowie's Market	Breakfast for Two	Elizabeth Elwell
Christie's Indoor Garden	\$25 Gift Certificate	Phyllis & Ray Mitchell
Handknits By Judy	Handknit Scarf	Nance & Bruce Barrett
Jake's Market in Andover	\$10 Cash Card	David & Sarah Brownell
Mackenna's Restaurant	\$10 Gift Certificate	Patricia Moyer
Mackenna's Restaurant	\$10 Gift Certificate	Sandra & John Graves
Andover Service Club	Cookbook	Barbara & Lewis Barton
Forest Cone & Evergreen	Yankee Candle	Polly Richards

Winners – contact the Beacon at 735-5331 to collect your prize.

Prizes not redeemable for cash.

Are there **300** households in Andover that value the *Beacon*? Please help us reach our goal!

Households donating so far in Year Two: **156**



BECOME A BEACON MEMBER!

Here's my member donation of \$ _____ for (check one):
 Local Seasonal (\$25 min) Out of Town (\$25 min) Gift (\$25 min)

Local or Out of Town

Your Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone or E-mail _____

Seasonal

Other Name _____
 Other Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone or E-mail _____

Seasonal: which months are you at the "other" address?

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As a community newspaper, the *Beacon* relies almost totally on volunteers. **When you have the time and the inclination, please help – NO COMMITMENT REQUIRED!**

The *Beacon* is mailed free to all Andover addresses. We ask for a minimum \$25 annual donation from out-of-town or seasonal subscribers who would like the paper mailed to them. **We welcome donations from the community** and depend on your financial support for a large part of our operating budget.

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