

TOWN MEETING ISSUE COMING

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

The February and March issues of the *Beacon* are the most important issues of the year. They help our community prepare for a productive, constructive Town Meeting and School District Meeting, as well as meetings for our two fire departments and the Water District.

The March issue is also the issue in which we publish "The Rest Of The Town Report," a section that gives 20 or more of the local non-profit organizations that serve our community a chance to let us all know what they've accomplished in the past year and what they plan for the next.

Pulling together all the material for these two issues is a very big job, and we have very little time to do it. Material for the February issue needs to be in hand by January 15, and for the March issue by February 15 – in other words, before you know it!

Here's how you can help:

If you belong to any committee... talk with other committee members about what information your committee has that voters need to understand before Town Meeting. Get in touch with the *Beacon* right away so we can start planning how best to include that information in the February and/or March issues.

If you belong to a local non-profit organization... find out who might write a short (250 words) annual report for your organization by February 6 at the latest. Urge them to get in touch with the

Beacon right away for details about what to cover, how to send it to us, etc.

If you're involved in preparing a warrant article... give careful thought to what voters need to know to vote intelligently on the article, then get in touch with the *Beacon* right away to discuss how the *Beacon* can help get that information into voters' hands.

If you're a candidate on one of the March ballots... consider preparing a short statement (150 words maximum) and providing a head-and-shoulders photo for the March issue. Materials must be in our hands by February 6 at the latest. Contact the *Beacon* right away for details.

If you're planning to prepare something for the February or March issues... please don't blindside us with it. Contact us right away to discuss what you're working on so we can be prepared.

If you have any interest in town government... please volunteer to help us make the February and March issues the best they can be. We need people to organize and coordinate, to research, to write, to edit, to contact people...to do all kinds of things! Please let us know how you'd like to help. Your help is very important!

The *Beacon* can't serve the community to its full potential, especially for the critical February and March issues, without your help. If there's anything you can do to help, please contact us at 735-6099 or Mail@AndoverBeacon.com as soon as possible.

2004 Town Report Wins Award

Andover 2004



The 2005 Local Government Center Conference was held over three days in mid-November in Manchester. On November 17, Andover was awarded second place for its 2004 Town Report.

The New Hampshire Local Government Center conducts an Annual Report Contest each year. The awards are given to towns in each of six population categories, plus one for the cities.

Andover's win this year was no fluke. Rather, it's our fifth Town Report award in the past 12 years. In 1993, the town won first place. It won third in 1997 and 2000 and second in 2002 and again this year.

The plaque for the 2004 Town Report award is on display in the Town Office lobby.

Pictured on the cover of Andover's award-winning Town Report 2004 were seven Andover servicemen. Clockwise from the top: Benjamin Beauchemin, David Grover, Matthew Adams, Larry Wilson, Jeremy Shedd, Kevin Barry. Center: Nicholas Meier (1980-2004).



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Debbie Martin

County Taxes Are Correct... But Are They Fair To Andover?

By Jim Danforth
State Representative

The December *Beacon* raised the question of why Andover's share of the overall County assessment has increased by so much more than the overall County budget itself has increased. Based on my long conversations with County staff and officials, it's not because of an error in calculations.

Andover's share of the County budget is 1.9%, while Concord's share is 25.9%. Everything being equal, this means that Andover's total real estate assessed value should be 7.5% of Concord's. And based on the State's equalized assessed valuations from 2004 for Andover, our \$274,459,881 valuation is indeed 7.5% of the City of Concord's \$3,630,522,465 valuation.

But based on personal observation of the size of Andover and the size of Concord, I have a hard time seeing how Andover's tax base could be 7.5% of Concord's tax base. I think that percentage should be a lot lower, maybe around 4%.

Other Ways To Compare

Real estate valuation isn't the only way to compare two areas. Here are some other ways to look at whether we're paying just our fair share of the County budget, or more.

Commercial Property: I have not been able to obtain the numbers com-

paring the commercial property tax base of Concord and Andover; but I feel it would be fair to claim that Andover has less than 1% of the commercial property of Concord.

Population: A population comparison between Concord (population 41,380) and Andover (population 2,174) shows that Andover is only 5.25% the size of Concord.

Benefits: Based on the current 2005 County tax assessment and the 2004 benefit analysis of County services (including employment by Andover residents but excluding the County prison), Andover property owners will be paying about \$80,000 more in County property tax than Andover receives in benefits from the County.

Using the 2006 County budget and 2005 County tax rate, Andover property owners would pay \$602,075 to the County under the current system based on property value. If County taxes were based on population, Andover would pay \$421,452. With a direct benefit estimated at \$522,075 for the residents of Andover, the population method seems to give a number that's too low to be fair.

I have written to Merrimack County Commissioners asking that a committee be set up to investigate possible methods of determining towns' and cities' share of the County tax rate that would be fair.

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The *Beacon* is Andover's most eagerly read source of good news from Andover, East Andover, West Andover, Potter Place, and Cilleyville. It is mailed every month to over 1,100 households in Andover and to many seasonal residents and out-of-town subscribers. For more information, call our ad sales team or visit AndoverBeacon.com

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Andover Beacon • PO Box 149 • Andover NH 03216 • Thank you!