

Please! Get A Round Tuit Today!

BEACON FUNDRAISING FOR 2008 STARTS SLOWLY

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

With less than a month to go, the Beacon's 2008 fundraising effort is only about one-third of the way to our goal of 325 voluntary donations from Andover residents.

Please – if you saved the envelope from last month's issue, take a moment and get it in the mail today! It's vital that the Beacon cover its expenses every year, and that just won't happen without voluntary donations from a large chunk of the community ... starting with you!

If you didn't save the envelope from last month's issue, just use the form on page two of this issue, or donate up to \$50 online at AndoverBeacon.com.

The Beacon is published by Community Publishing of Andover, Inc., a New Hamp-

shire non-profit corporation that relies on voluntary donations for about a third of the Beacon's annual operating expenses.

Other than a small salary for me and commissions for our ad salespeople, the Beacon is produced entirely by volunteers. But it still takes a budget of about \$48,000 a year to bring the Beacon to every mailbox in Andover every month at no charge.

About two-thirds of our budget is covered by the approximately 90 advertisers you see in the Beacon every month. That leaves a full third of our annual budget that has to come from somewhere other than ads. Some comes from out-of-town subscribers and gift subscriptions, but most has to come as voluntary donations from the residents of Andover.

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Andover Beacon

AndoverBeacon.com February 2008 \$2.00

2008 Tax Bills Could Rise 3.5%

By Ed Hiller
Andover Budget Committee

The Andover Budget Committee has finalized their 2008 budget recommendations for the Andover School District, the Town of Andover, the two Andover fire precincts, and the Andover Village District. These recommendations will be presented to the voters at the annual meetings in March.

The school tax rate is predicted to go up from \$9.84 to \$10.77, an increase of \$0.93, or 9.5%. The Town tax rate is predicted to go down from \$2.01 to \$1.61, a decrease of \$0.40. The tax rates for each of the Andover fire precincts are predicted to remain the same. The Andover Village District budget is funded primarily by charges to its customers for their water use. It does not receive any real estate tax monies.

Neglecting any increase in the County tax rate, which is unknown at this time, the total 2008 tax rate for Andover will increase by \$0.53 over the total 2007 rate. For property in the Andover fire precinct, the rate will go up from \$14.96 to \$15.49. In the East Andover fire precinct the rate will go up from \$14.63 to \$15.16. In each case the increase is about 3.5%. Any increase in the County tax bill will have a direct impact on these predictions.

School District Budget

The school budget accounts for approximately 70% of the total tax bill. For the current school year of 2007-08, the total appropriation voted at the 2007 annual School District meeting was \$3.773 million.

A number of revenue items reduced
See Tax Bill on page 6



Al Laughy used the pedestrian catwalk across the intake structure at the Highland Lake dam to avoid the big trench in which the new box culvert was installed on January 29. More on page 5. Photo: Charlie Darling

Public Hearing On Proposed Cell Tower Postponed

By Don Gould
Andover Planning Board

The Town of Andover has hired both a radio frequency engineer – David Maxsom of Broadcast Signal Lab in Massachusetts – and a special legal counsel – Russell Hilliard of Upton and Hatfield in Concord – to assist the Andover Planning Board and the Andover Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) in the investigation, review, and decision-making regarding Verizon Wireless' applications for a special exception to construct a ground-mounted personal wireless service facility ("cell tower") on property at 135 Beech Hill Road and a variance to exceed the Andover Zoning Ordinance height limit of 100 feet to a tower height of 120 feet.

The ZBA had planned a public hearing on Tuesday, February 12, to receive comment from the public and from legal counsel and radio frequency engineers representing both Verizon Wireless and the Town of Andover, but at Verizon's request it has been postponed for at least a month or more.

The ZBA is empowered by statute

to hire independent experts, at the applicant's expense, to assist in the investigation and review of cell tower applications. The radio frequency engineer hired by Andover, upon hearing the Verizon Wireless experts, will assess the need for the proposed tower, as well as the types of available alternatives that might be more compatible with the letter and spirit of the Andover zoning ordinance and master plan.

Special legal counsel is required since applications for cell towers are governed by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TCA) which allows communications providers whose applications are denied by the local land-use boards to appeal directly to the federal court. The TCA places certain restrictions on the manner in which the ZBA addresses telecommunications applications. Because of the risks and pitfalls posed by failure to comply with the TCA, the boards must enlist the aid of experienced counsel familiar with the TCA and its interaction with local land-use regulations.

Three-Year Cycle Of Appraisal Inspections Concludes

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

In 2006, representatives from Avitar Associates, under contract to the Town, conducted physical inspections of about a third of the properties in Andover. In 2007, they visited another third of the properties in Andover. In both cases they were looking for obvious discrepancies between what they can see on a property and what the tax records show.

The process continues this year with the final third of Andover properties to be inspected later this month and into March. If you weren't visited by Avitar in 2006 or 2007, then within a couple of weeks you should receive a letter letting you know that they'll be calling. In the weeks to follow a representative from

Avitar, wearing a photo ID, will visit you requesting information about your property. He or she will measure the exterior and will inspect the interior.

The inspection itself will not result in a change to your assessed property value except to correct errors, or if the inspector finds changes have been made to your property.

All of this is in aid of complying with a state law that requires every municipality to keep the overall level of property value assessments within approximately 10% of the actual market value of the property. Keeping the Town's assessment database as up-to-date as possible is the most efficient and economical way to be sure we comply with the law and that everyone's assessment is as fair and accurate as possible.

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