



The Waterstrat family escaped unharmed from the fire that destroyed their Flaghole Road home on February 28 despite the best efforts of firefighters from Andover, Salisbury, Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Belmont, Webster, Wilmot, Danbury, New London, Bristol, Sutton, and Sanbornton. There will be a benefit supper at the Franklin Elks Club on April 13 at 4 PM to help the family.
Photo: Meghan Barton

Fire Destroys Home in East Andover; No One Hurt

Community rallies behind AFD, family

By Rene Lefebvre, AFD chief

You know it has been a long cold winter when even we hardy New Englanders groan at late March snowstorms. I am so ready for spring.

Several weeks ago, your fire and emergency medical team were called to a structure fire on Flaghole Road. Thankfully, the homeowners were outside when we arrived, allowing us to

concentrate on firefighting and not rescue operations.

It is suspected that this fire had a big head start and may have burned undetected for some time. The home was equipped with smoke and CO detectors. We understand that they did work, but the fire may have been hiding in walls and crawl spaces, delaying their activation.

The weather was very cold, causing fire trucks and hoses to freeze. We called for three alarms to have enough

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Selectmen Postpone Semi-Annual Tax Bills until 2015

Input from Town Meeting prompts change

By the Andover Board of Selectmen

At a February meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the Board voted to change from an annual tax billing to a semi-annual tax billing. The Board heard from residents about real savings generated by going to a semi-annual tax billing and other advantages.

We also heard from residents who prefer annual tax billing, as it allows those with investments to gain an additional month of interest and/or returns on their money before withdrawing funds to pay tax bills. Still other residents with seasonal income prefer an-

nual tax billing because money can be quite tight for them during part of the year.

A group of residents submitted a warrant article by petition to raise the issue of semi-annual tax billing at Town Meeting. A technical issue of law made the warrant article non-binding; however, Town Meeting clearly supported delaying semi-annual tax billing.

On March 17, at the first Board meeting following Town Meeting, the Board voted to defer semi-annual tax billing until 2015. The Board still feels saving over \$8,000 a year makes the change worthwhile. With over a year's notice of the change from annual to semi-annual, everyone can be better prepared.

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To the 110 Andover residents who have sent checks this year to support the *Beacon* in 2014: *Thank you!* Every check, no matter how large or small, is a big help and an important sign that the community values the *Beacon*.

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Town Meetings Pass 2014 Budgets

Budgets rise 3.7%; taxes could rise 10%

By Ed Hiller

Andover Budget Committee

The Andover town budgets for 2014 have been finalized by the several annual meetings. The School appropriation is up \$88,597 over last year. The Town appropriation (net of pass-throughs) is up \$141,188 over last year. The Fire Department appropriations are essentially unchanged. As a result, the total net appropriations for 2014 are up by \$230,651 or 3.7% over the total net appropriations for last year.

Current estimates of revenues and surplus funds available to offset taxes are significantly lower this year than last. As a result, it is estimated the tax rates for 2014 will increase approximately 10% over the rates for 2013.

For a property in the Andover Fire District, the total tax rate for 2014 is estimated to be \$21.35. For a property in

the East Andover Fire Precinct, the total tax rate is estimated to be \$21.09. These rates are each up approximately \$2.00, or 10% over the total tax rates for 2013.

For a property assessed at \$200,000, these total tax rate increases equate to a 2014 tax bill that is approximately \$400 higher than last year's tax bill.

School District Meeting

The Andover School District voted to accept the Budget Committee's recommended budget of \$4,704,553. This is an increase of \$88,597 or 1.9% over last year's appropriation of \$4,615,956.

Estimated revenues to offset taxes are assumed to be approximately the same as last year. However, it is unlikely that there will be any fund surplus available this year that could approach the \$309,095 that became available to offset taxes last year.

Furthermore, the taxpayers voted at School District Meeting on March 3 to authorize the School Board the option

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Meghan Barton of New Horizons Hairstylists concentrates as she shaves the head of Andover Fire Chief Rene Lefebvre. Rene was one of dozens of men, women, and children to get their heads shaved at the St. Baldrick's Foundation fundraiser for childhood cancer research at Proctor Academy on March 29. Thanks to volunteers like Meghan, Rene, and about 100 others, the event raised over \$26,000, with the Andover Fire Department alone collecting almost \$9,000 in donations. You can still donate at AndoverBeacon.com/Baldrick. More photos: page 24. Photo: Charlie Darling

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