

Thoughts from Jim Danforth as He Steps Down

Three years on the Board of Selectmen

Jim Danforth

After serving as part of the team of Selectpersons for the past three years, I want to thank those I served with and worked with. When I entered office, I was not prepared for the scope of work or the knowledgebase that the job of Selectperson requires.

My singular goal while running for office was to treat everyone the same. In presenting that goal, it became linked with fairness. In hindsight, this linkage, which seemed natural, was in fact a mistake I regret. The idea of what is and what is not fair is not easily defined across the width and breath of the duties of the Board of Selectmen; therefore,

treating everyone the same was unfair at times.

I want to also thank those in town who invested their time and attended our meetings and asked questions. Be assured that your attendance made a difference; your questions improved our answers and actions. Communicating clearly and providing the information known builds trust and confidence in town government as a whole. I hope that the improved Web site at Andover.NH.us will continue to improve trust, understanding, and the sharing of ideas.

Our town needs you, your perspective, your ideas, and your hopes. Please take on some active role in our town, by sharing; Andover will be a better place to live and work.

Andover Takes On More Road Maintenance Responsibility

Jeremy Blackman

Concord Monitor staff

From the March 11 Concord Monitor

Andover voters last night agreed to take on road maintenance themselves, rather than contract it out as needed – a new approach that selectmen said will save taxpayers more than \$150,000 over eight years.

Under the proposal, the town will hire two part-time workers and purchase a dump truck and about \$50,000 in equipment. The work will include tree trimming, mowing, bridge and ditch cleaning, and other related tasks. First-year Selectwoman Sophie Viandier said the town has previously paid private companies for the work, which can cost around \$35 per hour. The new employees will each work 32 hours per week and be paid up to \$15 per hour. They will report to the town's road agent.

"These things are cheaper for us to pay for," Viandier said.

Road and bridge maintenance costs have been increasing steadily in recent years. Viandier said the plan will help the town keep up on small issues, which will in turn prevent larger, more costly problems from developing.

Several voters questioned parts of the plan, such as how it will affect insurance and worker compensation rates – minimally, officials said – but overall opposition was limited.

"I urge you to vote yes on this, because it's going to be very expensive for us if we don't," said former selectman

Andrew Guptill.

Voters defeated a different approach last year, in which the town would have taken out a \$1 million bond for both road and bridge repairs. Guptill opposed that then, saying it failed to put in place any real long-term maintenance plan.

[Jeff Newcomb], one of the few vocal opponents, warned voters against purchases like the dump truck, which will cost about \$60,000 over three years.

"This is the start of how government grows bigger," [Newcomb] said, noting a host of unforeseeable costs and wage increases.

But Selectman Duncan Coolidge responded that officials have "no expectation of building a town road department."

"Cost savings over time, that's our goal," Coolidge said.

Voters also passed a \$1.5 million operating budget, a \$92,300 increase over the 2014 budget. They further voted to sunset the current bridge capital reserve fund and create two new bridge accounts, one for general maintenance and one for repairs to the Lawrence Street bridge. The town will put \$200,000 in taxes to the latter fund, which will be used for the town's portion of Lawrence Street bridge repairs, a State Bridge Aid project.

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