

**Administrative Assistant's  
Report to Selectmen  
March 6, 2012**

At the end of October 2011 I became a member of the Town's Office Staff. My early assignment was to gather the necessary information about the office procedures currently in use to assist the Administrative Assistant and eventually assume that role.

I quickly discovered that an ever expanding work load had overwhelmed and buried the current Administrative Assistant. My goal was to make sense of the piles of paperwork and organize all tasks to create a more efficient workplace.

Because the accounting task was not my job and I believed they were being handled expertly, I felt very comfortable focusing on the jobs at the "front desk"

However, on a particularly busy day I was asked to enter the bills for payment that week. I soon began to notice unusual entries and questionable alignment of expenses in various departments.

Small errors I found seemed to be addressed and I was told that all of these discrepancies were being corrected.

Although I am not an accountant I have extensive experience in bookkeeping and accounting for my own business as well as management in Professional offices. I have developed formats for statistical reporting and tracking for my business as well as time studies for others. I believe that numbers need to do more than add up. They need to tell a story.

As the weeks went by the accounting issues continued to surface from the very early part of the year and it was evident they were not being addressed or even understood. I expressed my concerns which the Selectmen followed up on and they began to realize the problems were extensive and had been compounding over many years.

At the recommendation of the accounting and auditing firm of Roberts & Greene a municipal accountant with years of experience was hired.

At that point we began working closely to evaluate the condition of the accounting system and to make some sense of it before Town Meeting. The New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration has also been a part of this evaluation. They have no concerns of improprieties but agree the previous accounting problems must stop. They recommend understanding the numbers for 2011 but leaving the uncorrected accounting as is. They further recommend that the time be used to focus on 2012 to align with the State and to correct the distribution going forward. They also highly recommend using only a municipal accountant with experience to accomplish the task.

Work has begun and will continue for several weeks to examine every detail of the system. Hundreds of checks have been opened and invoices pulled to track the accounting path. In many cases that path ended at a wrong location. Some were redirected by choosing a more correct account to charge the expense. Each correction, of course, modified the reports.

Many items, depending on how they were viewed by the handler, were mis- assigned but fell within a generally acceptable area. While this offers unclear detail it does meet the burden of proof for the State reports as a proper expenditure.

We will continue to work under the guidance of the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration and all final accounting practices will have to meet with their approval. They have offered help whenever it is needed.

Additional issues adding to this job are changes in the NH Retirement System reporting process and changes in the Federal Tax percentage. The tax amount was due to revert to previous percentages on March 1, 2012 but due to the federally granted extension that should remain the same until the end of 2012. The QuickBooks program still defaulted when it shouldn't have. This created a minor payroll issue that was very quickly picked up by Anita and repaired immediately.

### **Recommendations going forward:**

Monthly Budget review and analysis of reports as well as account system status with the Office staff and the Selectmen.

Quarterly public invitation - Budget review and analysis of reports as well as account system status with the Office staff and the Selectmen. (I would like to shoot for early in July)

### **Goal:**

Have a representative from the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration review the system and the reports when complete and then visit this office to present a formal approval of a healthy accounting program.

Weekly information exchange will continue as well as immediate alerts to urgent matters.

It is my hope that the discovery of problems, admission of problems, and the work on solving those problems will help this Town move forward in a more positive way in 2012.

### **Final Note:**

The Annual Town Report actually made it to print and arrived 1 day before the deadline of March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,

*Eddie Drinkwater*

Eddie Drinkwater, Administrative Assistant