

Editorial

Hear the qualifiers

The quote "There is a potential that we might hit that mark," is a little scary when talking about a budget for a building the town desperately needs.

Selectman Christopher Gagnon used that sentence when he updated selectmen on the progress of the public safety building project. The committee is between \$300,000 and \$800,000 over their \$5.3 million budget, but they won't know the exact amount until construction documents are constructed and the project is put out to bid.

The qualifiers are needed and people need to hear them. They have to hear the words "potential" and "might," because they give fair wording that this project might need more money down the line.

It is everyone's hope that the building will come in close to budget and the rest of the money can be found within the town's funds. But it is common knowledge construction costs can be unpredictable.

This new committee has made the right decision by taking these next steps instead of going back to a town meeting and asking voters if they want to give some yet to be determined extra money for a project whose cost is still unknown.

You cannot ask voters to support or reject something that is not firm.

The committee's decision to move forward and with building a new public safety building instead of converting the hardware store is also more fiscally sound on many levels.

The Public Safety Building Committee isn't the only group in town or in the area offering qualifiers on their plans.

The Town Hall Renovation Committee in Ashburnham is facing questions about how to house town employees (do town officials want to think about taking control of the Stevens Building again?). And Westminster's library renovations committee is facing tight budgets after the contractor presented new materials for construction.

With all these questions pending about construction, there are those in the community who would suggest it means committee members aren't doing their homework, talking through the possibilities or taking the necessary actions.

This does not seem to be the case in these situations, where committee members' reputations, tax bills and their town's future is on the lines.

The realistic answer is that construction and budgeting is not a science ... it is an art. An art that can be unpredictable and that is controlled by forces outside that of the committee.

Yes, a committee should do all of its homework, and yes, it should always strive to stay on or below budget. But at this point everything needs to be studied, and changes can't be rejected out of hand.

Letters to the Editor

Fishing allowed in Quabbin

To the Editor:

President Kennedy once said that, "Defeat is an orphan, but victory has a thousand mothers." The recent approval by the Massachusetts Water Supply Trust to reopen the Quabbin Reservoir for seven day a week fishing access is a great case in point to that great quotation.

The North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association and the Quabbin Fisherman's Association working for decades on promoting the splendid fishing and recreational opportunities rightly deserve the lions share of the credit for the successful restoration of this achievement. These two groups, their leadership team and their point person, Retired Brigadier General William Meehan, gave a powerful, united and responsible voice to the hundreds of anglers who partake in recreational activities on the 400 billion gallon Quabbin Reservoir.

Fishing is perhaps the greatest of all true family activities. It is grandparents, parents, and children alike partaking in healthy bonding time. The Angler groups also organize a special Olympic Fishing weekend in August and as one who has seen the smiling faces on those people who face extraordinary challenges in their every day lives, it is nothing short of inspirational and emotional for many of us. God Bless them. So many people of the Swift River Valley who sacrificed their New England hometowns of Dana, Enfield, Greenwich, and Prescott deserve the access of this 58,000 acres reservation and the Water Supply Trustee members are making this happen. So, congratulations to all of you who have advanced this measure. Generations past, present, and future owe you a debt of gratitude.

Stephen M. Brewer
State Senator
D-Barre

Animal advocates speak out

To the Editor:

To help promote October as "Adopt a Shelter Dog" month, Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue (a non-profit, no kill rescue based in Winchendon) is working to raise the public's awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering pets. Every year, 8-12 million companion animals enter this nation's shelters. Pet owners need to realize that they have the power to make a difference in reducing these staggering statistics by spaying and neutering their pets. Unfortunately, because of a lack of responsibility and misguided beliefs about spaying and neutering, far too many pets are continuing to multiply, creating thousands of puppies and kittens. These unwanted animals either die painful deaths on the streets or end up in overburdened community animal shelters.

The facts are, spayed and neutered pets are usually healthier, better behaved and live on the average of two to three years longer than unsterilized pets.

Specific benefits for pets include:

- 1) Reduced risk to some forms of cancer and other medical conditions
- 2) Elimination of many types of objectionable behavior
- 3) Reduction of urine odors and spraying
- 4) Elimination of bleeding which occurs during the heat period
- 5) A calmer, more people oriented pet

For more information on the importance of spaying and neutering, to find out about low cost spay/neuter programs in our area, or to find out how to help with some of the animals looking for a home in our area, please visit www.ahimsahaven.org.

Marjorie Twiraga
Adoption Coordinator
Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue

Committee invites seniors to lower tax bills

To the Editor:

The Ashby Senior Property Work-Off Committee is looking for a resident of Ashby to serve on the committee. The program is for taxpayers over 60 years old who volunteer their services to the town in exchange for a reduction in their tax bills on the property that they own.

Taxpayers must meet income guidelines and this abatement does not affect abatements individual or couples may already receive. Volunteers would be paid the state minimum wage per hour up to the allotted abatement that the town and committee have decided on.

The responsibilities of the volunteer would be to help finish and revise forms, help individual taxpayers that apply, explain the program, do community outreach, solicit or explore job possibilities and do follow-up.

The commitment to this committee will require a couple of hours a week to start and then meetings as needed. It will be an on-going commitment.

Interested individuals should contact Dondi LaRue at the Town Hall (978) 386-2427 ext 15

Joan Chandley
Committee Member
Ashby

Evangelidis shows effectiveness, integrity

To the Editor:

We support Lew Evangelidis for state representative for the towns of Westminster, Holden, Hubbardston, Oakham, Princeton, Rutland and Sterling. We've known Lew for four years and have always been impressed with his accessibility, compassion, effectiveness and integrity of character. When Lew first knocked on our door four years ago, he promised he would be an independent voice for the people of Massachusetts, that he would work to make sure that local aid and education funding were top priorities and that he would be accessible. We wholeheartedly believe he has kept each of these promises. In addition to that, he has helped us by writing letters of support related to issues we believe in, and much more personally, he connected his legislative aide with our daughter to help her with her college search. We encourage you to find out more about Lew Evangelidis by visiting his Web site at www.lewevangelidis.org. Please vote for Lew on November 7.

Jay and Jennifer Shenk
Westminster

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