

State of the Town
2011

Despite a difficult economic climate and unprecedented weather events, the 2010-2011 fiscal year was a productive one for the town. We welcomed Dick Gee and Bill Wallace as new members on the Town Council and Susan Robertson was re-elected. In addition, we continue to enjoy the volunteerism of 86 members who serve on the Town's 15 boards and commissions, providing an opportunity for broad-based community involvement and support.

Our town boards made significant contributions during the year. The Tree Board completed the qualifications for our Town to be designated a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation. The Design Review Commission streamlined its application process and made important improvements to our sign regulations. The Planning Commission neared completion of new subdivision regulations following several years of diligent work, and the MACC and Recreation Boards, as well as the Town Council, participated in long-range planning activities.

We received a number of important grants for improvements to town facilities in the last year. The Mountain Arts Community Center received a \$100,000 energy efficiency grant to replace windows and insulation. The Recreation Department received an \$85,000 grant for much needed repairs to our Town pool, which will be completed this winter. We also received ARRA grants that resulted in the replacement of our traffic signal with a new energy efficient LED unit with turn arrows, as well as paving North Palisades drive and portions of James Boulevard.

Across the board, all Town departments have fared well thanks to the dedication of our department heads: Finance Director Mark Johnson; Police Chief Boyd Veal; Fire Chief John Vlasis; Public Works and Storm Water Director Loretta Hopper; Water Department Director William Sanders; Librarian Karin Glendenning; Mountain Arts Community Center Director Barb Storm; and Recreation Director Jarred Thompson. And we cannot say enough about the hard work and leadership of our town manager Honna Rogers.

Finance Department

- We reduced the principal on the Town's school-related loan from \$4.2 million to \$3.2 million by making scheduled and additional payments. Going forward, the additional principal payments are estimated to save \$150,000 in interest expenses as we continue to work on early retirement of the debt.
- Began the 2010-2011 fiscal year with a total General Fund balance of \$4,238,000 and ended with a total balance of \$4,379,000 in spite of several large and unexpected expenses such as the re-roofing and repair of the ceilings at the MACC, and the costs to recover from the significant storms last winter.

- And finally, we established a vehicle replacement fund to ensure that monies will always be available to replace important Town equipment when it nears the end of its useful life.

Police Department

- Responded to 2,185 incidents resulting in 104 arrests and 140 charges.
- Exceeded state requirements by training new officers a total of 1280 hours, continuing our dedication to having one of the best and most responsive departments in the region. New officers now spend eight weeks in a field-training program before working independently.
- Existing officers completed an additional 1271 hours of training.
- Continued our commitment to training by acquiring a new 6000 square foot Police Training Facility, thanks to Monique and Tom Poteet. Our only cost for this facility will be utilities.
- Dedicated an additional 133 man-hours to keep SM roadways safe with help from a traffic enforcement grant, received from the Governor's Highway Safety Office.
- Encouraged seatbelt use at SMMHS, and we continued our SRO and DARE programs.
- The department was accepted into the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation Program and began the three-year process designed to improve efficiency, effectiveness and professionalism.

Fire Department

- The Fire Department responded to 724 incidents during the year, 61% of which were medical or rescue-related.
- Logged over 6107 hours in training, for an average of 245 hours per person both full- and part-time.
- Ensured that all full-time firefighters, except for two new hires, were trained and acquired certification as Fire Apparatus Operators.
- Ensured the safety of our residents by maintaining an ISO rating of 5.

- Purchased and placed in service nine (9) new state of the art portable radios obtained through a federal grant, enhancing the safety of our firefighters.
- And finally, we achieved a total 67% of fire personnel that are State of Tennessee Fire Service Instructors.

The Public Works Department

- Collected 3,587 tons of garbage at curbside.
- Supported 12,584 visits to our transfer station.
- Diverted approximately 900 tons of recyclable material from the landfill through our recycling center.
- Began single stream recycling, giving us the capacity to recycle plastics #1 – 7 and plastic bags in addition to our previous products and all without sorting. Now, all items except cardboard can be deposited in one container making operations more efficient and the process more convenient for our residents.
- Chipped 1,383 tons of brush, much of which was from storms this year, and made it available to the public, keeping it out of the landfill.
- Offered mulch loading with our backhoe for \$5/ load on the first Saturday of each month during the summer. 366 residents participated in this new program.
- We spent 1,744 hours cleaning up from record storms.
- 1,040 hours were invested in snow removal using different methods such as salt, sand and plowing. In addition, a new brine pretreatment system was developed by staff and put into operation.
- Spent 8,264 hours collecting brush and leaves from the roadside and over 500 loads of leaves were picked up.
- Performed pavement cuts, crack sealing, pothole filling, as we prepared streets for paving.
- Implemented a sign maintenance program in compliance with the new retro-reflectivity requirements for all regulatory signs under the new Federal Highway Administration rules well in advance of the 2012 program requirements and the 2015 installation requirements.

- We also completed several other major projects: We facilitated the installation of the upgraded traffic signal; paved 3.6 miles of streets; installed over 200 linear feet of crosswalks using Safe Routes to School grant funds; completed 1.4 miles of paving and 12 miles of striping using State Street Aid funds.
- Began construction of over 3600 feet of sidewalk along James Boulevard using Transportation Enhancement Grant funds.
- Trained all Public Works employees in various job related areas such as Construction Inspection, Fleet Management, Traffic Control/Flagging, Traffic Sign Retro-reflectivity and Asphalt Pavement Maintenance; 3 staff members achieved TDOT's Hot Mix Asphalt Roadway Certification; and 2 staff members became Solid Waste Association of North America Certified Solid Waste Professionals.

Stormwater Department

- Received a Notice of Coverage from TDEC as required by the State to maintain compliance with our National Pollution and Discharge Elimination System permit.
- Used the hydro-jetter to clear 16 public storm drainpipes and 8 private driveway pipes and assisted with other drainage issues.
- 4 staff members achieved certification in the Tennessee Erosion Prevention & Sediment Control Program.

Water Department

- Responded to 1,300 work orders.
- Read 14,518 water meters and repaired 14 major water line breaks in the Town's distribution system.
- Responded to 941 Tennessee One-Call requests.
- Replaced 18-³/₄" galvanized water service lines across streets with copper and re-concreted the streets.
- Disconnected 417ft of 2" galvanized line on Wilder Drive.
- Replaced 2-1976 vintage compound meters at our swimming pool.

- Completed an infrastructure water distribution model with the assistance of Arcadis Engineering.
- Ensured the quality of our water supply through preventive maintenance, our tank maintenance program, and maintained operational efficiencies at the lowest cost possible.

Library

- Added 2,517 new items to the Library's collection including books, books on CD and movies. Most of the added items were purchased with Town funds, and some were obtained through donations from citizens or provided by the Friends of the Library.
- Added 307 new members during the fiscal year, giving the Town a patron base of 4,682 by the end of June 2011. Monthly circulation figures averaged 6,000 items.
- Special programs included the Library's well-attended Summer Reading Program, which featured eight different events; free German lessons provided by Gisela Meier-Maletz; a Children's Christmas program featuring Rob Inman reading "The Polar Express"; a talk by Southern author Josephine Humphreys; a book signing by Julia Platt Leonard; Lions Club vision screening for toddlers; a teaching session for the Junior Garden Club; a visit and tour of the Library by Third graders from Thrasher School; and a Volunteer Appreciation Party.
- Created a new Website for the Library to publicize upcoming events and send email blasts to patrons with email reminding them of special programs.
- And we added a new drive-up book drop in the front driveway, which has proved to be very popular with our patrons.

MACC

- Provided over 500 people with a variety of classes, including summer camps.
- Accomplished major repairs and improvements for compliance of fire and life safety codes.
- Continued to use volunteers and seek funding to improve the building by refinishing floors and repairing plaster and painting. Many thanks to North Shore Fellowship, SM Lion's Club, SM Playhouse, and several Eagle Scouts for their efforts.

- Completed a Visioning process and a 5-year strategic plan.
- Hosted and sponsored 6 major concerts and 2 art exhibits.
- Created a presence in social media.
- Sponsored a Youth String Camp which included Joe Lee, Director of the Huntsville Symphony and Youth Orchestras, and Robert Bradshaw, composer in residence.
- Generated revenue of approximately \$56,000.

RECREATION

- We enjoyed an average 10% increase in participation across all sports over the prior fiscal year
- Served approximately 1,600 youth in organized programs.
- Established a Pickle-ball league at the Town Gym.
- Maintained the gym for youth play and free play for both youth and adults.
- Experienced record numbers in attendance and revenue for the Town swimming pool.
- Re-surfaced 4 Tennis Courts behind Town Hall, thanks to a generous donor.
- Established a maintenance program for our Town's hiking trails.

Economists do not envision significant growth or a return to pre-2008 revenue levels within the next several years. Accordingly, it will be necessary for the Town to continue its focus on fiscal responsibility and improving the efficiency of each department and the services provided to the community.

As we began the budget process last year, it became evident that we would be faced with a revenue shortfall of over \$300,000, even after each department head and the Town Manager had worked to reduce costs without affecting the quality of critical services. Unfortunately, for the first time in ten years, the Town was faced with the eventuality of a property tax increase for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. In order to avoid dipping into the fund balance or transferring monies from the funds dedicated by referendum to pay off the school debt, we increased property taxes fifteen cents per thousand dollars of valuation with the intention of keeping us on firm financial footing for some years to come.

Many projects are slated for completion this fiscal year: the James sidewalk; the water and fire hydrant project on Palisades and Balmoral; repairs to the pool and Town Hall; and we expect a final report of TDOT's recommendations for improvements to Highway 127/Signal Mountain Boulevard. There will be discussion and, hopefully, implementation of town-wide water service upgrades; movement toward completion of the WWTa lateral replacement program and ultimately a connection to the Moccasin Bend Sewage Treatment Plant; and other important infrastructure improvements. We anticipate bringing closure to other discussions too, such as the establishment of conservation easements to preserve certain parklands in the Town such as the Rainbow Lake Natural Area.

To be sure, our staff will encounter unexpected events during the upcoming year, but we are confident that with the help and support of our community, they will be up to the task.